



# JOHN LANE AND THE NINETIES

Acc. No.	11832
Class No.	G. 10.
Book No.	1166

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

*Biography*

ANATOLE FRANCE

GEORGE ELIOT

CHARLES LAMB

CARDINAL NEWMAN

THE OXFORD MOVEMENT

FATHER TYRRELL

*Essays*

THE PATH THROUGH THE WOOD

THORN AND FLOWER

THE UNCHANGING WITNESS

*Anthology*

AN ENGLISH TREASURY OF  
RELIGIOUS PROSE





JOHN LANE  
From an oil painting by Ernest L. Ipsen

JOHN LANE  
AND THE NINETIES

BY  
J. LEWIS MAY

ILLUSTRATED



JOHN LANE THE BODLEY HEAD  
LONDON

FIRST PUBLISHED IN 1936

Acc. No.	11832
Class No.	G. 10.
Book No.	1166

THE TEXT PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN  
BY BUTLER AND TANNER LTD., FROME AND LONDON  
THE COLLOTYPE ILLUSTRATIONS BY L. VAN LEER AND CO. LTD.

*'Namque erit ille mihi semper deus . . .'*

TO

RICHARD LE GALLIENNE

TO WHOSE DISCOURSE

ON

PROSE AND POETRY

I WAS PRIVILEGED TO LISTEN

IN DAYS GONE BY



## PREFACE

**S**O FAR away the Nineties shine, so different was that world from that in which we live to-day, that I am sometimes half tempted to wonder whether it ever really existed at all. It is usually possible for people in such a dilemma of uncertainty to reassure themselves that they have not been dreaming by visiting the actual scene where this or that event took place. The theatre remains, if the players have departed. But, for me, that is no longer possible.

‘Like the python’s sumptuous dress,  
The frame of things is cast away. . . .’

Gone is Nash’s pleasant, cream-coloured Regent Street, gone the Hogarth Club, and gone like a dream, or a ‘dissolving view’, that queer little bookshop in Vigo Street which, with its window filled with choice and rare editions, used to look across that narrow thoroughfare—so quiet and, in those days, so secure—to Albany and its shaded walk.

All those people, poets, artists, bibliophiles, *dilettanti*, that used to swarm there, like bees around a hive—Le Gallienne, Davidson, Watson, Dowson, Wilde, Beardsley, Ricketts, Shannon and the rest, all save the first, who still occasionally writes to me from the shores of the Mediterranean, have crossed ‘the unpermitted ferry’s flow’. Even the central figure, round whom, as in a charmed circle, these gifted folk revolved, even he,

## P R E F A C E

‘Little Johnny Lane’, as we used to call him, grows faint and dim. ‘Little Johnny Lane’, indeed! Far were we from guessing then how that little man was going to ‘make history’, and how he was destined to be the guide, philosopher and friend to so many of those brilliant men and women who played their several parts in that strange tragi-comedy which we call the Nineties.

Of all those figures that made such a stir in their time, how many are fated to survive? ‘Fame after death’, says George Borrow, ‘is better than the top of fashion in life.’ How many, then, of the poets and artists of that glowing era (I speak of the Bodley group), will be found to have put on the raiment of immortality? That is a question which Time alone can answer; but already two or three seem assured of an enduring niche in the temple: Beardsley, for example, and Rothenstein, and Francis Thompson, and Max Beerbohm, the ‘Incomparable Max’ as he is called, and rightly called, for in truth ‘there is none like him, none!’. Of the rest, who knows to what ‘aureate earth’ they may have turned, or yet shall turn, whence posterity, some far-off day, may haply call them back to life? There are some essays and poems of that hero of my youth, Richard Le Gallienne, which, in some happier, less iron time, will surely bloom again. . . .

Lane, it must be borne in mind, was not, at least in his most characteristic days, a publisher for the many. Philistia was not his hunting-ground. He was essentially a collectors’ publisher, and specialised in choice and limited editions. Nor did he set out to attract the ‘best-seller’. It is true that at least one did come his way; but here, too, the quality of rareness was maintained; his work was marked by the true Bodleian *cachet*, for the creator of Paragot and Marcus Ordeyne had this unique

## P R E F A C E

distinction: he was a 'best-seller' who was also in the truest sense an artist, and deserved his fortune, which, by the way, he knew—none better—how to spend with grace and charm.

When, in his later days, Lane, in my attic in Albany, or at his house, over a bottle of his favourite *Hermitage* after dinner, grew reminiscent of his past, it was on his early days, on his memories of his father's farm at Hartland that he chiefly loved to dwell. Thus it comes about that his childhood memories and my own personal recollections of him, and of the original Bodley Head, form the staple of my narrative. For the rest, I have had to depend on hearsay and on arid records, till the time—rather before the Anatole France period—when I came into close relation with him again. What matters it? After all, the hey-day, the glow, was in those early years, those years which were a sort of watershed of Time, the frontier between 'a dream that was dying and one that was coming to birth'.

It has been a pleasure thus to attempt to roll back the years, and to trace the lineaments of an old and valued friend. He always seemed to me like one of the family, and the fact that we sometimes had our differences—always happily composed—only served to deepen that impression. By whatever shore he tarries now, I hope he will look with all his old indulgence, all his kindly humour, on this frail, imperfect tribute to his memory.

J. L. M.



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

THE AUTHOR's thanks are due, and are here gratefully recorded, to Mr. de V. Payen-Payne and Mr. A. J. A. Symons, who, amid many pressing engagements, generously found time to read the proofs of this book, and offered many valuable suggestions; to Mr. Max Beerbohm and Messrs. Heinemann for permission to reproduce the former's caricature, 'Some Persons of the Nineties', and to Mr. Philip Guedalla, who owns the original, for courteously allowing it to be photographed; to Viscount Esher who kindly lent his copies of *The Sphinx* and *In the Key of Blue* for the purposes of reproduction, and to Mr. Holbrook Jackson, who did him a similar service in respect of *Silverpoints* and *Poems Dramatic and Lyrical*; to the National Magazine Company for allowing him to reproduce the caricature of Mr. Max Beerbohm by 'Sic', which originally appeared in *Vanity Fair*.

For permission to quote from their books, articles, letters, etc., he desires to thank the following: Mrs. Florence Hodgkin, Mr. and Mrs. Pennell, and their publishers Messrs. Heinemann, Sir William Rothenstein, Mr. D. Y. Cameron, 'Alastair', Mr. Laurence Housman, Mr. Arthur Waugh, the proprietors of *Punch*, Mr. J. M. Bulloch, Mr. G. Bernard Shaw, Mr. J. A. D. Bridges, Mr. A. A. Coles, Mr. Stephen Leacock, Mr. Osbert Burdett, Mr. Holbrook Jackson, the proprietors of

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

*The Tatler*, and the executors of the late Mr. John Galsworthy.

If any names have been inadvertently omitted from this list, the author trusts that the oversight may be forgiven him.

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JOHN LANE AND THE NINETIES





## *Chapter I*

### BIRTH AND PARENTAGE

SOME TWELVE miles to the west of Bideford, half hidden in a green hollow between moor and sea, the little village of West Putford clusters about the base of a wooded hill which descends, with an abruptness remarkable even in this rugged corner of North Devon, to the waters of the Torridge flowing seawards from its moorland home. Northwards, over the hills, less than half a dozen miles away, stretch the wide waters of the Atlantic which, even on windless summer days, break with the sound of muffled thunder upon rock and boulder. To sheltered Putford, even the most tempestuous autumn gales bring no echo of the sea. Only, on the exposed places near by, on the fringe of some rolling stretch of purple moorland, a cowering line of stunted weather-beaten beeches, their twisted roots grasping desperately at the scanty soil, tells of the power of the long winds that come streaming in from the neighbouring ocean.

The guide books, happily, make no mention of West Putford, nor do the hordes of tourists, who throng in charabanc and motor-car the long, straight road from Bideford to Hartland, turn aside to mar its peace or corrupt the rustic simplicity of its manners.

In this sequestered parish, on the 14th March, 1854, John Lane, the subject of this memoir, was born. His

## THE JENNS

father, Lewis Lane, was the youngest of the five sons of John Lane, yeoman, of Iddlecot (locally pronounced 'Idgecot'), and his mother was Mary Grace, daughter of John Jenn, miller and corn-merchant of Cory Mill, hard by.

The Jenns were descended from some Flemish Huguenots who had settled in Devon and Cornwall in Tudor times. There are several farms in the two counties which bear their name, two of them within a few miles of West Putford, namely Jenn's Thirdon, in the parish of Bradworthy, and Jenn's Crowley in Milton Damerell.

The Jenns were a capable, thrifty, even a gifted race, and many of the qualities, both practical and idealistic, which were so markedly characteristic of John Lane, may, with some certainty, be ascribed to his maternal ancestry. It was, for example, a Jenn—Abel Jenn of Halsdon in the parish of Dolton, an attorney turned farmer—who for many years acted as agent for the Devonshire estates of the great Sir Robert Walpole.

Halsdon is now the seat of the Furse family, to whom it came by inheritance, a fact which would point to some kind of connexion between the Jenns and the Furses. C. W. Furse, one of the most distinguished of the art contributors to the *Yellow Book*, was a son of a former owner of Halsdon, Canon Furse of Westminster, while William Cory, the Eton master and author of *Ionica*, belonged to the same family, for the Furses bore the patronymic of Johnson until, of two surviving brothers, one assumed the name of Furse and the other (the poet) that of Cory. It was to Halsdon that William Cory retired after giving up work as a schoolmaster, and it was there that he died.

John Lane's maternal grandfather, John Jenn, despite his Huguenot ancestry, was a staunch Churchman and a

## A REMARKABLE WOMAN

keen sportsman. He married Isabella Mary Hobbs, of Whalesborough Barton in the parish of Marhamchurch near Bude, one of the largest and most flourishing farms in Cornwall. John Jenn was fortunate in his choice of a bride, for Isabella Mary, who doubtless brought with her a well-stocked dower-chest and handsome expectations, as being the only child of a prosperous yeoman, was, in herself, and quite apart from these more material considerations, a remarkable woman. Her family came of Puritan stock, and some of her people appear to have been Quakers, a circumstance which, as will subsequently appear, was not without its influence on her grandson. She had been at school with Charlotte I'ans, who, though forty years his senior, became the first wife of Robert Stephen Hawker, the poet-Vicar of Morwenstow. Her ancestral Puritanism seems to have sat lightly upon her, for she cultivated with astonishing success the amenities, the lighter graces of life. She was an exquisite dancer, a writer of poetry, and famous throughout the countryside for her skill in gardening. 'She was', says her grandson John, who adored her, 'in every respect a lovely creature.' She died in 1869, leaving three sons and one daughter, Mary Grace, the youngest of the family, who, as we have said, threw in her lot with Lewis Lane of Iddlecot.

The Lanes had been yeomen in Devon for many centuries, and, since there is nothing very striking in their annals, it may be taken for granted that they did all that honest yeomen should. If a few of them, here and there, exceeded what might have been expected of them under the rubrics of gallantry and conviviality, we may be sure that they erred from sheer kindness of heart and exuberance of animal spirits. Yet when I say that there is nothing very striking to report concerning the Lanes, I am forgetting one important piece of history,

## TICKLING TROUT

for tradition has it that the first pipe ever smoked in England was smoked by a Lane on Putford Bridge.

In the year 1757, Iddlecot was leased by the Countess of Oxford to one Josiah Lane, yeoman, for a period of ninety-nine years. Before that term expired, however, on the 12th June, 1827, the freehold of Iddlecot was conveyed by Lord Clinton and others to John Lane, the publisher's grandfather, and it was here that his father, Lewis Lane, was born.

Iddlecot, though not an extensive farm, was a fertile one, and used to be known as 'Little Egypt', being a land of plenty. When, in 1853, Lewis Lane married, he settled with his bride on a farm at Buckland Brewer; but his stay there was brief, and, three years later, he removed to Forcewell, Hartland, 'in which parish', says his son, 'I spent my happy, I may say, my romantic youth. My earliest memories, are bound up with Hartland, the earliest of them all being our journey thither on leaving Buckland, when the carriage broke down. I was not then three years of age.'

'My recollections of John Lane', says Mr. R. Pearse Chope, a noted antiquary and a former president of the Devonshire Association, 'go back to the time when we tickled trout together in the little stream—"river" we called it—that separated our fathers' farms. Years afterwards, when revisiting the scenes of his youth, his first request was to be taken to the site of his early exploits, to try whether his right hand had forgot its cunning. Anglers are wont to boast of the pleasure of fishing with rod and line; but what do they know of the rapture of catching a trout with the naked hand? It is by no means easy, and I am bound to admit that on this occasion Lane was unsuccessful and returned from his expedition a disappointed man.' Thus Mr. Chope.

#### ‘USAGES OF PRISTINE MOULD’

The last time I was with Lane in Devonshire, we were motoring along from Bideford to Bradworthy. It was June, and the way was fringed with tall fox-gloves in full bloom. Lane insisted on stopping the car in order to pick some of the flowers and ‘pop’ them, as he had used to do as a child. This he did to perfection, and the performance afforded him immense satisfaction.

Lewis Lane was a yeoman of the old school, a great observer of ancient customs, fond of good cheer, a liberal dispenser of hospitality, a gentle master to his work-people, kind to the poor. He never missed the custom of drinking ‘Lamb’s Wool’ on Christmas morning. ‘Lamb’s Wool’, which is described by Mr. Pearse Chope as a ‘concoction of hot spiced ale with pieces of toast and roasted apples floating in it’, is alluded to by Herrick in his ‘Twelfth Night’:

‘Next crowne the bowle full  
With gentle Lambs’ Wool,  
Add sugar, nutmeg and ginger,  
With store of ale too;  
And this ye must doe  
To make the Wassail a swinger.’

Lane, according to Mr. Chope, was fond of calling attention to Shakespeare’s allusion to it in ‘A Midsummer Night’s Dream’:

‘Sometimes lurk I in a gossip’s bowl,  
In very likeness of a roasted crab;  
And when she drinks, against her lips I bob,  
And on her wither’d dew-lap pour the ale.’

The custom of ‘blessing the apple-trees’ was observed on Old Christmas Eve, and that of ‘crying the neck’ in harvest.

## OPEN HOUSE

If Lewis Lane entertained on too lavish a scale, if he squandered his money with a prodigality that awakened misgivings in the mind of his careful spouse, he did but err from generosity. The reckoning was to come and it was to prove no light one. Even at this early hour the prudent mother was beginning to be exercised about her son's future. Her husband, the youngest of five brothers, had only himself to 'look to', and he, it was plain, was too easy-going, too light-hearted and open-handed to worry himself very much about the future. But as yet the cloud upon the horizon was no bigger than a man's hand. In the meantime, Lewis Lane went on farming industriously enough, but spending more than he made, keeping open house.

## *Chapter II*

### A RETROSPECT

**I**T MAY not be unprofitable to dwell for a while on the social conditions then prevailing in this part of Devon, since those who knew him intimately are aware to what a great extent John Lane's character and tastes were moulded by his early environment.

To begin with the Church. It was twenty years or more since Newman had quitted the Anglican fold, but the Tractarian Movement, which was destined in the long run to produce such striking changes, doctrinal and ceremonial, in public worship throughout the country, had as yet had little effect in this remote corner of western England. It is true that Hawker of Morwenstow, just over the Cornish border, was a High Churchman and practised an elaborate ritual; but it was a ritual of a somewhat individual character, a ceremonial evolved out of his own poetic imagination. At any rate, Hawker was an exception, and, for the most part, the parsons round about were what Dinah Morris and her Methodist friends would not have hesitated to call 'idle shepherds'. Yet most of them managed, and without effort, to fill their churches; and, in spite of the fact that some of them were learned men, they were frequently in much closer touch with their parishioners than are the majority of their present-day successors. The reason, or one of the reasons, for this is that in those times the parsons farmed

## A MIRACLE EXPLAINED

their own glebes and thus had a practical interest in common with the members of their flock. They were comrades in fair weather and in foul. 'That it may please Thee to preserve to our use all the kindly fruits of the earth, so that in due time we may enjoy them', had a more vivid, more intimate significance as falling from the lips of a parson as anxious to save his hay or his corn or his cider-apples, as any other farmer in the parish.

Doctrinal instruction was often simple, but usually to the point.

'What exactly is a miracle, Sir?' asked one of his parishioners of Parson Jack Russell.

'I'll tell you,' said his reverence, taking him and showing him a hole in the ground, near the churchyard wall. 'Now, look down that hole,' he went on, 'and tell me if you can see a fox there.'

While the aspiring theologian was bending down and peering into the aperture, the parson bestowed a vigorous whack on his posterior.

'Did you feel that?' he enquired.

'I should just reckon I did, Sir,' answered his pupil.

'Well,' rejoined the Parson, "'twould have been a miracle if you hadn't!'

But the choir, and especially the band, were a powerful incentive to regular church attendance.

Religious considerations proper may have played only a secondary part in bringing John Lane's Uncle Josiah to church with such exemplary punctuality every Sunday of the year. But he was a lover of music and possessed a praiseworthy sense of *esprit de corps*. Josiah was responsible for the bass-viol. The fiddler was one Arnold, son of the village carpenter, who was no ordinary carpenter, but a skilled and tasteful carver in wood.

## A NUMEROUS PROGENY

Besides these, there was a flute, a 'cello, a clarinet and, at one time, a cornet. When the musical portion of the service drew near, the performers would all clatter out of church, headed by the parish clerk with his pitch-pipe, and tune up under the shadow of the tower. The parish-clerk was a great character and cultivated the little piece of land which he possessed with as much industry and success as Virgil's old gardener of Tarentum.

Another typical worthy was old W——, one of the workmen at Forcewell. 'W——', John Lane used to say, 'had always been our workman and mainstay. He was the father of nineteen children. When any of our cousins or friends came to see us, we always primed them to ask W—— if he was married. The stereotyped reply was, "Iss, I shu'd think so, and us 'ave 'ad nineteen children, an' what's more, us tried very 'ard for the twentieth. But one of our maidens (daughters) was misfortunate, an' us brought up the chiel, which made the twentieth. Iss, us 'ave 'ad twenty cry-outs in our little cottage!"' I have often heard my father say', Lane used to add, 'that he never gave W—— more than twelve shillings a week and the cottage at a nominal rental, but he had so many yards of potato-ground free, and corn at a reduced price throughout the year, and when he died, nineteen bright sovereigns were found saved in his coffer.'

Mr. Pearse Chope says that fifty years ago on his father's farm, 'a veteran reaper in his ninety-third year was again at his post for the seventy-seventh year for our family, and cut at least half an acre of good wheat during the day in a workmanlike way, with his reaping-hook, beginning at 8 a.m. and finishing at 6 p.m. For this he received 1s. 2d. and his food (five meals); but on that particular occasion, I remember, a visitor gave him

## BURSDON MOOR

2s. 6d. extra, which he said was more than he had ever before received for a day's work.'

It will not be irrelevant to record here, as near as I can in Lane's own words, an incident which left a lasting impression on his mind: 'A visit', he says, 'to Bude or Clovelly, was a red-letter day. One day—it was in 1865—my father told me that our foreman was going to Bude on the morrow to fetch coals and slates with a waggon and four horses. I might go with him. The carter was to leave at 5 a.m., and so anxious was I to be in time that I went to bed in my clothes, even to my boots. The carter left punctually at 5 a.m. and I finished my sleep in the waggon, wrapped up in sacks; but I remember waking up as we crossed Bursdon Moor before daybreak and seeing a lantern hoisted on the front of the waggon and the reflection of another lantern which was fastened on to the tailboard. Whenever I have since seen the engraving—incidentally a very rare one—after Turner's drawing entitled "Crossing Bursdon Moor", I have always recalled my own journey under conditions which were still more picturesque.'

There was yet another scene which never faded from his memory, which I can also describe in his own words:

'There was one hard and frosty Christmas, when the snow lay so thick on the ground that there was nothing green to feed the sheep upon. My father, however, took a ladder and a reaphook and cut from the cob-wall of a linhay huge branches of ivy, which he gave to the sheep. Goats, of course, are very fond of ivy, but I never succeeded in finding any confirmation of this practice of giving it to sheep until I read "A Winter's Tale", where in Act III, Scene 3, the following passage occurs: "They have scared away two of my best sheep,

## A WINTER'S TALE

which I fear the wolf will find sooner than the master; if anywhere I have them, 'tis by the sea-side browsing <sup>of</sup> ivy!"

"The Reverend Canon Ellacombe," adds John Lane, "in his *Plant-Lore of Shakespeare*, is silent on the subject, and he once confessed to me that he had never heard of the custom before."

But the custom is by no means so rare as Lane appeared to imagine. A farmer whom I know on the borders of Dartmoor, tells me that, in that district at all events, freshly cut shoots of ivy are often given as tit-bits to sheep or cattle that are ailing and off their feed.

### Chapter III

#### WORK AND PLAY

HARTLAND WAS in those days, and indeed still is, a wild and primitive spot, and the otter and even the badger were often to be seen in the Forcewell copses. One of the most exciting events of John Lane's boyhood, however, was concerned with larger game. It was in fact a stag-hunt, of which he used to give a graphic account. 'My father', so he used to tell the story, 'had traced for some days the slot of deer in the snow, and a young buck had been seen by one of our workmen. It was reported to be a wild deer from Exmoor and my father, being a sportsman, invited his neighbours and friends to meet him next day in the woods.

'At the appointed hour there duly appeared Arundel Dene the surgeon, Mr. Chope of Farford, Mr. Turner of Baxworthy, Mr. Cole of Berry, Mr. Congdon of Stoke, and several others whose names have vanished from my memory. These worthies, having nothing but powder and shot, hurried off to Bill Blight, the blacksmith, and ordered an ample supply of bullets. The farm hands were provided with sticks and bludgeons and on this most unprecedented occasion, my Uncle Josiah came over from Putford to act as *generalissimo* and to station the guns in what he deemed the strategic positions. The dogs, consisting of spaniels, setters, sheepdogs and others of more dubious lineage, at length started the

## A STAG-HUNT

deer. The excitement was tremendous. Eventually, of course, the inevitable happened. The unhappy beast fell to the gun of Uncle Josiah. But before that ineluctable dénouement took place, I remember being in a narrow lane leading to the brook, when the deer leapt just over my head, from one hedge to the other. Even now, I can feel the wind of him as he went over. The hide, I think, went to Mr. Chope, and the venison was divided between the sportsmen. So intense had been the excitement among these devotees of the chase when it was first announced that a deer had made its appearance in the neighbourhood, that none of them had thought of making enquiries as to where it had come from. No sooner, however, had the stag been laid low, than the news spread like wildfire that it had escaped from the herd of deer in the grounds of Hartland Abbey, the seat of Sir George Stucley. Perhaps it was because the spoil was divided so as to satisfy everybody, perhaps it was prudence born of the consciousness of their common guilt—at all events, whatever the explanation, this most irregular event seems never to have become public property.' Such was the story of the slaughtered deer, in the words, as near as I can recall them, in which Lane used to relate it.

Those who hold that real education is something more than a mere matter of classes and examinations and organised sport; those who consider that what goes in at the eye is no less important than what goes in at the ear, will readily understand how salutary was the effect that these country sights and sounds would naturally have on an impressible and intelligent boy. 'It does not seem possible', says Anatole France, 'for a man to have an altogether common cast of mind whose young days were

## REAL EDUCATION

passed round about the quays of Paris, hard by the Palais Mazarin, where the eye looks across to the Louvre and the Tuileries, and where the glorious River Seine flows on amid the towers and turrets and spires of Old Paris.' Not less beautiful, not less gracious in their way, were the sights and sounds that greeted the eye and ear of young Lane as he wandered about the woods and fields that encompassed his Hartland home. Time and severance made the memory of these places yet more dear. He had for them the deep, unchanging love of an exile for his native land. These places, which engraved themselves upon his heart, were his real 'education'.

All this is not to say that book-learning was neglected. The first school he attended was kept by a Miss Heal, daughter of the local Independent minister. From there he passed on to the National School, Hartland, the head-master of which was a Mr. Ellacote, who subsequently abandoned teaching and went into partnership with his brother-in-law, John Prust, a prominent London stock-broker, also a Hartland boy. Ellacote was succeeded by Matthew Webb, a bright, dapper little fellow who came from Chagford. Webb was engaged to a girl called Lucy Harding, who was the daughter of one of the Forcewell work-people and had been nurse to John Lane's sister. If his homework was not properly prepared, if he was late for school, or was guilty of any other dereliction, John Lane used to find it an admirable palliative of the dominie's displeasure, to convey to him some message from Lucy. Webb evidently conceived a fancy for the boy and took infinite pains in grounding him in his rudiments. Having passed a little more than a year under the ferule of Matthew Webb, John Lane was sent to a school at Chulmleigh, near South Molton Road Station on the North Devon line. Chulmleigh 'Academy'



HARTLAND CHURCH  
From a watercolour by R. A. Wickham



## ROBBING AN ORCHARD

—such, alas, it was called!—was attended by the sons of well-to-do farmers and of some professional men. It was conducted by one John Walling Brooks, who, according to Lane, was ‘greatly in advance of his time in matters relating to electricity’. He was also a collector of china and furniture, and it was to him that John Lane ascribes the birth of his own interest in such matters. On one occasion, Lane and two or three of his school-fellows who had been sent for a walk to Eggesford, carried out a raid on Lord Portsmouth’s orchard. They were filling their pockets with the fruit, when they were alarmed by the sound of voices and horses’ hoofs approaching. Lane promptly mounted his tree, while his accomplices, less agile or less daring, sought such cover as they could find below. To their great surprise and alarm, they perceived that the riders were Lord Portsmouth himself and his son, Lord Lymington. The marauders, however, were mercifully unobserved; the horsemen rode on.

At the General Election of 1868, Sir Stafford Northcote came down to Hartland to address the electors. Lewis Lane, a staunch Tory and a Churchman, was persuaded by his wife to interview Sir Stafford on their son’s behalf. Sir George Stucley’s influence was also enlisted, as was that of the Rev. Robert Stephen Hawker. The result of all this industrious wire-pulling was that in the following August a letter was received from Mr. P. W. Davison, the Secretary of the Railway Clearing House, nominating John Lane to a junior clerkship in that institution. His presence was required in London two days later. That was terribly short notice. There was not a moment to be lost. Unfortunately, John was nowhere to be found. His mother had given him an Exmoor pony on which he was accustomed to ride about

## FAREWELL TO HARTLAND

visiting his relations, or making little pilgrimages to haunts of beauty and romance like Clovelly, Bude, Morwenstow, which did more for him in the way of education, one suspects, than Chulmleigh 'Academy' and the accomplished Mr. Brooks. At length he was run to earth in the harvest-field at Churston, the self-invited guest of his uncle, Richard Walter. He was at once driven back to Hartland and two days later was taken to London by his mother. Neither she, nor, of course, her son, had seen the great city before. According to Lane, his mother gave the cabby an extra sixpence to drive slowly over Waterloo Bridge. Was it to observe the majestic view on either side of her; or had she even then some premonition of the instability of the structure? Mother and son found rooms that night in a small private hotel in Drummond Street, off Euston Square, now incorporated in the Euston Hotel. Next day they went together to the Clearing House.

It must have been very early that August morning when the carriage that was to take the travellers to catch the London train at Bideford drove out from Forcewell Farm. The road between Bideford and Hartland is not especially picturesque. Little is to be seen from the road itself till the sea breaks upon the view near the end of the journey and, by the unwitting stranger, Clovelly and Bucks, Peppercombe and Portledge might be passed by unheeded and unguessed at. But from time to time, after they had passed Fairy Cross, the travellers, if they were not too engrossed with the great adventure that lay before them, would have caught from a hilltop a fleeting glimpse of Lundy riding like a shadowy galleon at anchor far out on the moving waters, and as they drew towards their journey's end, they would have seen the long line of rollers breaking on the grey boulders and the

## BIDEFORD BRIDGE

jagged rocks and the wide stretches of yellow sand that fringe the long curve of the bay; they would have seen where the waters whiten and seethe over the dangerous bar, and, surely, before it was too late, they would have turned to look once more on the cliffs of Hartland, now purple in the distance, which one of them at least was not again to behold for many a day to come.

At length, with much caution and a great grinding of brakes, the carriage slowly descends the precipitous High Street at Bideford, and as they drive along the mast-fringed quay and begin to cross the historic bridge that spans the Torridge, the boy, who has always had an eye for the beautiful, suffers his gaze to rest for a moment on the gallant old town with whose story he was so familiar; on the river broadening out towards the sea; on the high woods of Annery or seawards, past Appledore, and Instow, to where the glimmering uplands beyond Braunton melt into the faint azure of the Exmoor hills.

## *Chapter IV*

### THE RAILWAY CLEARING HOUSE

MRS. LANE remained long enough in London to settle her son in lodgings at No. 34 Gower Place, where he occupied a room which had formerly been the apartment of Giuseppe Mazzini. It contained a portrait of the famous patriot inscribed to Mary Morrison, the twenty-stone landlady. Mrs. Morrison had been cook to Sir Edward Ryan, a distinguished Indian Civil Servant. Her late husband had been a soldier and afterwards Hall-Porter at University College. Mrs. Morrison was the natural daughter of a Welsh clergyman of the Establishment, but she herself attended the chapel of the Particular Baptists, in Gower Street.

This pious and voluminous woman seems to have taken a maternal interest in her young lodger from Hartland, for, as often as she could, she persuaded him to accompany her to chapel. She was accustomed to give full rein to her religious emotions over the Sunday dinner, weeping voluptuously—it was her sole indulgence—over the beautiful passages in the sermon of the morning. The good landlady was doubtless but too well aware of the perils which beset young men at large in the metropolis, particularly in the neighbourhood of Euston. 'Johnnie darling, won't you come home with me?' was the startling invitation, pronounced in a beguiling voice,

## THE CLEARING HOUSE

of an unknown lady in Euston Square. The boy, hearing himself thus addressed by name, stopped short, blushed, blurted out 'I don't know you', and incontinently took to his heels.

Before being put 'on the strength', so to speak, of the Railway Clearing House, Lane, in common with other candidates, had to pass an examination. In those days at all events, the task was not a very exacting one. To write legibly, to spell correctly, and to 'do' decimals—such were the requirements, and Lane satisfied the examiners. There was one other candidate up at the same time, James Murray, whose brother, Donald, afterwards Secretary of the National Liberal Club, was already in the Clearing House. As Murray came from the Lewis Islands and spoke 'braid Scots', while Lane spoke equally broad Devon, the interchange of ideas between the two neophytes must have been attended with considerable difficulty. They struck up a friendship, however, which was only terminated by Murray's death.

If there was a competition for ugliness among all the public buildings in Great Britain, it would be surprising if the Railway Clearing House did not carry off the palm. The dullness of its exterior is flawless, and it is to be hoped that no agitator for a 'Brighter London' will ever mar the perfection of its unloveliness. Yet the work that goes on within it is such as to earn the gratitude of every traveller by train. What the precise nature of those labours is I do not pretend to grasp, but the bewildering complexity of the problems with which the gentlemen of the staff are called upon to deal may be gauged from the fact that when their labours are done for the day, most of them seek relaxation for the mind in—chess! At least, this was the state of affairs in the early Eighties, when John Lane had served about half his time there.

## GENIAL FELLOWS

But it must not for a moment be supposed that the place was a prison-house. The hours were not excessive. You were free at five, provided you had done your job; and if you wanted to snatch an hour or two from the working day, it was not impossible to find a colleague as much in need of money as you of leisure, and so to strike a bargain satisfactory to both. In plain language, you paid him to do your work. Whether such an arrangement would be possible in these days, I do not know, but of one thing I am perfectly certain, and that is that, whenever John Lane purchased an hour or two of manumission, he did not employ his freedom in playing chess. He was much more likely to be off hunting for books or prints in and about Holborn or the Charing Cross Road.

Many of his fellow-clerks were genial fellows, friendly, clubbable men, by no means unfamiliar with the world of art and letters. One of them used to recall a remarkably tall, handsome man who used to come to his home when he was a small boy. The tall man had known his father in Spain—they had been involved together in some adventure there, but what the nature of it was he could not say. He thought it had to do with politics or religion. But he knew the tall man's name. It was George Borrow.

But John Lane's chief friend in the Clearing House, the one with whom he had most in common, was William Lestocq, who subsequently gave up his clerkship to go on the stage, where he acquitted himself with considerable distinction. He afterwards became General Manager to Charles Frohman, the celebrated Anglo-American impresario who went down with the *Titanic*.

Lestocq had rooms on the second floor at No. 3 Great James Street, which he shared with a talented and genial

## SWINBURNE INDIGNANT

Irishman of distinguished family, Hubert John de Burgh, poet, scholar and journalist. The floor below was occupied by Algernon Charles Swinburne. Lestocq and de Burgh were great entertainers. Their means were restricted, but not so their high spirits, and their parties made up in gaiety for what they lacked in magnificence. They were celebrated for their salads. These were compounded in the wash-basin, a utensil which, later in the evening, was used for mixing punch.

The company was numerous and varied, and included such men as Willie Wilde, Pontet the composer, Isaac Butt, Harry Furniss, W. S. Penley (another Clearing House clerk), Richard Dane, a barrister, who afterwards sat as Unionist M.P. for North Fermanagh.

The discussions at these gatherings were not always carried on in quiet conversational tones. At times they became tumultuous, and not infrequently the company would break out into song. Nor was evening the only time at which this confraternity forgathered. The peace and decorum of Sunday morning were often disturbed by their harmonious ululations.

At one of these Sabbath morning reunions, the uproar was so great that it called forth a vigorous protest from Swinburne down below. This was what had happened. Penley was at that time a chorister at the Greek Church and, after the morning service, he had come on to Lestocq's rooms, where a numerous company had already assembled. Penley was greeted with loud cheers. Presently, in obedience to the unanimous and vociferously expressed demand of those present, he struck up the Judge's song from *Trial by Jury*, in which he was then taking part, Lestocq supplying an accompaniment and the rest of the party joining with immense gusto in the Jurymen's Chorus. Now, it appears that the bell wires

## AN AWKWARD DILEMMA

of all the chambers upstairs were gathered together and fixed by a single staple into a corner just outside Swinburne's door. Exasperated beyond endurance by the stamping and shouting of the gentlemen above, Swinburne dashed out of his room, and, seizing the sheaf of wires with both hands, set all the bells in the basement furiously ringing, at the same time shrieking at the top of his voice: 'The place is nothing but a dirty pot-house, a dirty pot-house!'

This was rather a case of the pot and the kettle. Lestocq often discovered Swinburne on the doorstep vainly endeavouring to get his key into the latch, or fumbling ineffectually in his pockets for the wherewithal to satisfy an abusive cabman. On such occasions, his fellow-lodger would come to the rescue and assist the poet to his rooms, and the poet, who never forgot his manners, even in his cups, would insist on offering some sort of acknowledgement, some memento of his gratitude, to the man who had befriended him in his extremity. The 'memento' usually took the form of one of his books—which he always sent the landlady to reclaim next day. Lestocq also used to recount a story relating to Hollingshead's production of 'The Merry Wives of Windsor' at the Gaiety Theatre. It was arranged that Miss Furtado was to have a song which Swinburne was asked to write for her, and he did so. One day the landlady came to Lestocq saying that Miss Furtado had brought a poem of Mr. Swinburne's which she desired to have altered, but that, Mr. Swinburne being on his bed temporarily incapacitated, and quite unable to understand what was wanted, she was at her wits' end to know what to do. Lestocq advised Miss Furtado to write a note to Swinburne, which the landlady would leave on the poet's desk. Some days later, Lestocq

## SALUTARY INFLUENCES

asked the landlady how the thing had turned out. The landlady replied that, having left the note on Mr. Swinburne's desk as instructed, she had found there, next day, a reply addressed to Miss Furtado, though how or when he had written it Heaven only knew, for, as far as she could tell, he had been completely 'incapacitated' all the time.

Not a few of these men became known to fame in greater or less degree, and there were others whose reputation did not extend beyond their own immediate circle, but who, none the less, exercised a salutary influence on Lane—grave, yet quietly cheerful, fellows, who read good books and talked about them intelligently. Such a man was William Palmer, another son of Devon, with whom Lane remained on terms of close friendship all his life. Indeed he never forgot, or neglected, his old friends at the Clearing House. Busy as he always was with some new plan or project, he made time to drop in at Seymour Street now and again, and, with one or two of his former colleagues to lunch or dinner, talked about old times.

Where a large number of men of divers tastes and habits are gathered together for several hours of the day under one roof, groups and coteries are bound to come into being, and, just as inevitably, one group will look down with mild disdain upon another. Studious men, bookworms, bibliophiles, belong to a class not pre-eminently calculated to excite enthusiastic approval among the general run of men. But John Lane, book-hunter and book-lover as he was, was anything but narrow in his sympathies, and few men, whatever their tastes, failed to be attracted to him. In the first place, this little collector of books and china and prints was what Anatole France calls 'that very rare thing—a Man', and

## A TOUCH OF IDEALISM

in the second, he was richly endowed with the saving grace of humour.

John Lane, when he first came to London, was, according to those who knew him then, shy and rustic in manner and appearance, and he spoke with a pronounced Devonshire accent. These characteristics, with the quickness and adaptability that were natural to him, he soon exchanged for an ease and urbanity of manner which were to prove one of the principal factors in the success he was afterwards to achieve. Nevertheless, though no one could have been more completely at home in the literary and artistic society in which he now began to spend his leisure, and in which, later on, he came to occupy so conspicuous a place, he always remained a Devonshire yeoman. A Devon man—I, for example—would have known him for a fellow-countryman anywhere. The gracious setting of his Hartland home, the loveliness of the region in which his childhood and early adolescence had been passed, were never far from his mind and lent, even to the commercial side of him—for a publisher must have a strict eye to business—that touch of idealism which placed him above and apart from the mere trafficker in books, the mere purveyor of printed merchandise. John Lane had in him the tastes and instincts of an artist.

The year following his arrival in London, there occurred the death of Lane's maternal grandmother, Isabella Mary Jenn, who, with her flowers, her poetry and her graces, had lent a touch of beauty to the existence of those who, amid the long and exacting labours of husbandry, are often apt to neglect or to scorn the finer amenities of life.

## *Chapter V*

### JOHN LANE IN THE EIGHTIES

JOHN LANE and his visits to my father's house are among the earliest of my recollections. I must briefly explain how this connexion between Lane and my people came about. When Lewis Lane and Mary Grace Jenn were married at West Putford, my grandfather, who was Rector of the parish, performed the ceremony. He used to say that he reckoned it as one of his good deeds.

In those days it seems to have been already the fashion to leave the native village to seek—but not always to find—fame and fortune elsewhere, generally in London. My father and my uncle had been settled for some considerable time there, the former as a doctor, the latter as a solicitor, when John Lane came up to the Clearing House. They could hardly be said to have known John Lane because, when they left Devonshire, he could have been little more than a child; but at all events they knew of him. And they had a good deal in common. My father, it is true, was never much of an antiquary, but memories of Devon and its folk formed a topic between him and Lane that was apparently inexhaustible. At our house, Lane was always welcome, not less for his own sake than because he was a Devon man. With my uncle, the bond was no less strong, for he, like Lane, was a collector, though perhaps a more leisurely one, of books and prints.

## THE FRIEND AT RICHMOND

Lane, then, in those days, was a frequent visitor at our house. I can see him now as plainly as if it had been yesterday—alert, well-groomed, debonair, his eyes, *à fleur de tête*, with a twinkle in them, his hair well brushed, his auburn-sandy beard neatly trimmed to a point, looking rather like Sir Thomas Browne, and then, as always, eloquent of old books, old pictures, old china and old friends.

On his visits to us, Lane used often to make mention of a friend at Richmond, a collector and bibliophile, at whose house he was a constant visitor. Curiously enough, though I must have heard it times without number, the name of Lane's hospitable friend had completely escaped me. I was reminded of it the other day when I learnt that the Bodley Head was about to publish a book by a lady whose name was Hodgkin—Florence Hodgkin. Then it flashed upon me that here was the name for which I had been vainly ransacking my memory. But that is not the whole, or even the chief part, of the matter. The sequel is more remarkable, as will appear from the following letter from Mrs. Hodgkin herself.

'When Mr. Stuart Menzies' letter came telling me your firm were considering the book, and I told my husband, he exclaimed, "John Lane? Why, for ten years John Lane used to come out to Richmond every Sunday to lunch, and spent the afternoon in the library, going over the collections. Every Thursday he arrived after dinner with whatever he had found, and was shown straight into the Library. Sundays and Thursdays were known as 'John Lane's days' all through my boyhood. He was then a clerk in a Railway Clearing House. At that time my father was specialising in the Pepys things (now at Cambridge), and amassing rare books and

## A NOTED ANTIQUARY

mezzotints, as well as *incunabula* and historical MSS. He used to instruct John Lane, and, somehow, John Lane would find the things he wanted. He was an astounding little fellow and I envied his unbounded ambition. Later, when he found I was so fond of dancing, many were the invitations he somehow wangled for me. He knew everybody! He was a great man for 'the Ladies', and he married a most delightful woman who spoke four languages.

“After a time, he began to dabble in book selling—incidentally he bought for me all my first editions of Meredith—and he used to say that my father had laid the foundation of this knowledge, as I’m sure he did. But Lane had an extraordinary *flair*, and, I suppose, a special ‘way’ with him. Certainly my mother liked him.”

“This”, continues the writer of the letter, ‘and many side issues poured out in a spate at the mere mention of “John Lane” and I found it all most entertaining. Moreover, I like to think my father-in-law and John Lane have met again, are still hobnobbing, still taking a vivid interest, the one in his family, the other in his business, and, between them, have forged a link and brought about this publishing by you of Marabel’s Book. Do you know (the letter continues) my father-in-law’s book *Rariora*? It must contain much that was under discussion during those ten years of my husband’s boyhood. When he was seventy, my father-in-law was so ill that he had to be confined to one floor and was forbidden to descend a stair. So he engaged a special secretary and started to write *Rariora*. It took three years and rejuvenated him.’

Among the invitations John Lane ‘wangled’ for the dance-loving Mr. Hodgkin would have been one—and probably many more than one—to Lady Palmer’s at

## AN ACCOMPLISHED DANCER

Reading, where he used to take my half-brother, Dr. E. Rouse-Rouse, who was then a medical student. My half-brother told me that when on one occasion the band struck up 'God Save the Queen' at the end of the festivities, Lane, whose lack of 'ear' was notorious, took it to be another dance, and went off in search of a partner. But if he had no ear for music, he was an ardent and most accomplished dancer. How dapper and debonair he looked in his 'war paint', how he hit it off with everyone, this young man who not so many years before had come up a shy and awkward youth from Hartland to make his debut at the Clearing House!

In the letter I have just quoted, reference was made to Lane's ambition. Well, ambitious he was, there is no doubt about that. But his was an ambition without offence. He was ambitious, as it were, *for the fun of the thing*. Moreover, it was an ambition as far as possible disjoined from selfishness. He wanted you to share in the excitement of the fray—and in the glory. 'Once more into the breach, dear friends!' he seemed to cry. He is also said to have begun to 'dabble in book selling'. He 'dabbled' to some effect! He was, indeed, one of the most accomplished booksellers that ever lived.

I have seen *Rariora*, a prodigious work in three imposing, quarto volumes, profusely illustrated. Anxious, no doubt to inculcate a becoming sense of modesty on his young collaborator, Mr. Hodgkin, so far as I can see, makes no mention of that assistance which his son now acknowledges to have been so valuable.

At this time Lane, after flitting about from one suburban lodging to another, had at length found permanent and congenial shelter beneath the hospitable roof of Dr. Owen Pritchard, of Southwick Street. How he was guided thither reads rather like a romance.

## A POPULAR PRACTITIONER

Young Pritchard, having taken his M.D., came up to London—came, like John Lane, to try his luck. He brought with him some sound medical knowledge and the skill to use it, with a fund of indomitable courage, invincible tenacity, but with mighty little money. Looking about for a likely place to put up his plate, chance led him to a certain house in Southwick Street. It was already inhabited by a doctor, but it was in a deplorably dilapidated condition, and the practice was virtually non-existent. Pritchard saw possibilities in the place. He took over the house, bought the goodwill of the 'practice' for a song, and then, with the few pounds remaining to him, started to face the future. He worked like a lion. The task was one to daunt the bravest. He persevered with unwavering courage. At length his skill and resolution began to tell. Little by little at first, afterwards by leaps and bounds, he went ahead, till at length he became one of the most successful and most popular practitioners in the district.

It was in the early days, when the struggle, though no longer desperate, was still severe, that Lane found his way into Pritchard's surgery at No. 37 Southwick Street. He came to make known to the doctor that his father and mother had started, in Bristol, a home for the treatment of nervous and mental cases. Evil days had come upon Farmer Lewis Lane. He had been obliged to leave Hartland and had gone to Bristol, where his wife, with the courage and practical good sense with which she was so richly endowed, undertook with singular success the management of the institution on behalf of which Lane had come to Dr. Pritchard.

It appeared that Lane was on the look-out for lodgings in better and more congenial surroundings. Pritchard had an excellent room which he was willing to let. The

THE SETTE OF ODD VOLUMES

food-bill was to be divided equally between them. The scheme worked admirably, and the two men became devoted friends. They had tastes in common, for the doctor, too, was a bibliophile and a great collector.

When Lane first went to Southwick Street, it was arranged that he should pay ten shillings a week for his room. When, years afterwards, he had become a successful publisher, and went to take up his residence at No. 41 Albany, he was still paying Pritchard ten shillings a week! Pritchard was a generous, large-hearted man. He would not put the rent up on a friend.

Among my father's patients at this time—I am speaking of the middle or later eighties—was a member of the *Sette of Odd Volumes*, by name James Brown. His title in the confraternity was, if I mistake not, the *Astrologer*; at any rate, such is the personage depicted in a pen-and-ink sketch—executed by himself—which I have in my possession and which portrays him seated at a table encumbered with learned tomes, scales, pestle-and-mortar, spy-glass, phials, retorts and all manner of curious instruments. It was, I believe, through this same James Brown that Lane himself became a member of the sodality. One evening—it must have been before his election—Lane, my father and myself found ourselves among the guests of the *Sette*, at one of their periodical dinners. I suppose I was about sixteen at the time, rather young no doubt to dine with so learned a society. Dining out, however, was one of the accomplishments which my father held should be included in a liberal education, and I am sure Lane agreed with him. Bernard Quaritch, looking like an old Dutch burgomaster in his black skull-cap, and Sir Edwin Arnold, editor of the *Daily Telegraph* and author of *The Light of Asia*, were

## A BRILLIANT SPEECH

among those present, and the guest of the evening was Oscar Wilde, whom Lane was tremendously anxious to meet and who was then at the beginning of his triumphs. After the dinner, Lane told me that Wilde had made a most brilliant speech, sparkling with epigram, jewelled with wit. It had all been lost on me. I had been far too much engrossed with material things, the elaborate dishes, the glitter of the glass and the plate, to pay any great attention to the speeches. As a memento of the event, John Lane presented me with a volume of selections from the *Hitopadesa*—rendered into English by Sir Edwin Arnold. It bears the inscription, ‘James May from John Lane, Jubilee Day, 1887’. The last book he ever gave me—and he gave me many—was a book about the Brontës (*Brontë Moors and Villages*) dated Christmas, 1923, and inscribed to ‘James Lewis May from his old friend, John Lane’. There is a similarity, almost amounting to identity, between the two hand-writings, and, though they are separated by an interval of nearly forty years, it would be impossible, if the dates were concealed, to say which of them belonged to the younger man.

Lane himself, in his reprint of the *Life of Sir Thomas Bodley*, to which allusion has already been made, tells how his business came to be started. I will quote his own words:

‘In July, 1887, in company with my friend Mr. R. W. Wilson of the British Museum, I was one day at an exhibition in the Rembrandt Head Gallery in Vigo Street; and, casually asking the proprietor, Mr. Dunthorne, if he knew of any cosy little corner where a bookshop would be in fit setting, he at once rejoined that the premises in the same street, where he had originally hung up

## THE TUTELARY GENIUS

the sign of the Rembrandt Head, were vacant, and that he would be pleased to show them to me. I saw them, liked them, and at once made up my mind that here was the spot I had been looking for. "It should have a sign," I mused; for Mr. Dunthorne's had captivated me. The inspiration waited upon the wish: it should be *The Bodley Head*. Bodley, the most pious of founders! Who could so fittingly be enshrined as patron? Besides, Bodley was one of the most notable worthies of Devon, my native county, and had I needed a contributory motive, this would have been an ample one.'

'Mr. C. Elkin Mathews was then in business at Exeter; and, as we had already arranged that when opportunity offered itself we should join forces, he came to London at once in answer to my summons, saw and liked the place as much as I did. The premises were taken in Mr. Mathews's name, for I was not at first to take an active part, and we walked away discussing the future.

"It should have a sign," I said, "and I have thought *The Bodley Head* is what it should be." "The very same idea was in my own mind," answered my partner, fresh from Exeter, Sir Thomas Bodley's birthplace; and consumed as he was at the time with that passion for old literature which would, Exeter even apart, have made the coincidence perfectly natural. So *The Bodley Head* it became.'

No past is so remote that we cannot imagine a remoter, no cause so seemingly fundamental that we cannot imagine one deeper still. No doubt the least gesture of the most insignificant actor in that engaging trag-



“MAX”



## A THING OF BEAUTY

comedy, the Nineties, was determined before the nebular period, nay,

‘Before God fashioned star or sun’.

Unquestionably that is so. Nevertheless, the chronicler, if he is to begin at all, must begin somewhere. The battle of Marathon would suggest itself to some; to others, perhaps, the Synod of Whitby. Mr. Osbert Burdett, in his admirable survey of the Beardsley Period, as, following Max Beerbohm, he elects to call that stirring decade, begins with the Council of Trent. *I* propose to set out from an event more recent still, namely, that evening in December I think it was, 1889, when John Lane dropped in upon us at my father’s quite unexpectedly after dinner and made a momentous announcement—which was nothing less than that he was about to become a publisher.

It was clear to us, as soon as he got inside the room, that Lane had something important on his mind. We were not deceived. In a few moments, the customary greetings over, he produced from his pocket an advance copy of a little volume of poems by a new writer, whom he described as ‘a young man of undoubted genius, who was bound to set the Thames on fire, and whose face was the face of a Greek god’. These poems were to be published by his firm in an edition limited to two hundred and fifty copies. He invited my father to become the possessor of one or more of them. Nor did he forbear to appeal to our baser instincts. He assured us that, before very long, the book would be at a substantial premium and that, if we could ever bring ourselves to part with a thing so precious, we should make money by the transaction. There was, in truth, no doubt about its beauty. It was a slim little volume

## IN THE NICK OF TIME

in blue-grey boards, with a white panelled back, printed by Constable of Edinburgh on hand-made paper, with untrimmed edges. It was, as a neat label on the back recorded, *Volumes in Folio*, by Richard Le Gallienne—and it was irresistible! My father resolved to lay the foundations of a fortune, and subscribed for two copies. That little book was the first swallow—the harbinger of a glorious spring and summer. It, and its successors, which quickly followed, soon gave *The Bodley Head* a reputation for taste that no other publishing house at that time could rival.

Of course, Lane took the field in the nick of time. I cannot say what was going on in the centre of things; but I know that in the suburbs—in our suburb at all events—the tide of æstheticism had definitely set in. The Japanese fan had come into its own. Photogravure reproductions of Rossetti and Burne-Jones pictures were everywhere displacing Landseer. The naked marble of our mantel-pieces was now veiled in art-serge hangings bedecked with conventionalised lilies or sunflowers. Our ladies took up poker-work, or macramé, or beaten bronze. Some of the more advanced burnt joss-sticks. Moreover, they began to adorn, not only themselves, but their furniture with beautiful draperies of richest hues and softest texture, and the name of Liberty took on for them a new significance:

Sera tamen respexit  
Libertas.

There is no doubt, then, that Lane arrived on the scene just at the right moment. He took his tide at the flood and it swept him on to fame and—in the modest measure that was suited to his tastes and temperament—to fortune!

From the very outset, books published under the

## THE END OF THE PARTNERSHIP

imprint of the Bodley Head began to attract attention, not only, nor yet chiefly, among the commonalty, but in the very centre of taste and fashion—in Mayfair itself. So auspicious, in fact, did the omens grow that Lane soon realised that it was time for him to shake the dust of the Clearing House for ever from his feet. One evening at the end of 1891, he put down his office pen (which, to say the truth, he had not wielded with very conspicuous success) and issued from those gloomy portals for the last time. In February, 1892, he had his name put up over the shop in Vigo Street, after that of Elkin Mathews. From that date he devoted the whole of his time to the business; and, from that date, Mathews's peace of mind departed. Henceforth he had to play second fiddle, and he had to play it to a galloping *tempo*. He did his best. For him his bookshop 'was dukedom large enough'. Not so, Lane. He had wider ambitions. Mathews, who never ought to have left the calm of Cathedral Yard, Exeter, could not go the pace. In the end, he had to fall out. It was something of a tragedy. Lane, in the preface to his reprint of the life of Bodley, slurs it over thus: 'About two and a half years later, our seven years' partnership attained its term, and from October 1st, 1894, we have been working apart. By mutual arrangement, for our separation was of a perfectly cordial character, the sign of *The Bodley Head* was transferred to my new offices opposite.' *Cordial*, indeed! They were heartily glad to be rid of one another. But this is to anticipate—and by some years. I must first introduce the reader to the interior of the little, old, original Bodley Head, and describe, as well as I can remember them, some of the things that happened there while the partnership was still intact.

## Chapter VI

### THE *MISE EN SCÈNE*

IN SOME ways, I dare say, a man who was young in the Nineties, who saw and knew many of the *dramatis personæ* who moved across that brilliant stage, is the last person in the world to attempt a cool and critical appreciation of them. To me, I confess, it all seems like a play, on which the curtain has been rung down. The actors have all gone, 'melted into air, into thin air'. The scenery too has been taken down, or changed beyond recognition. More than once, I walked down Regent Street with Aubrey Beardsley, but it was not the Regent Street the present generation knows. The buildings were not so high, but they were more stately. We still retained some sense of harmony and proportion in those days. I remember, too, strolling westwards along Vigo Street one fine spring morning and seeing the Marquis of Dufferin and Ava looking into the window of the little bookshop on the right, just before you come to Savile Row. My lord of Dufferin, then, or lately, Viceroy of India, had a fine, intellectual face and a distinguished air, a distinguished, dandified air, with his frock-coat cut in at the waist and his curly, very glossy top-hat. He was gazing in at the window, holding his glasses to his eyes, with a stoop of interested condescension. Little Elkin Mathews, posted in the doorway of his shop, had observed him through the

## A VANISHED SCENE

glass top, and felt honoured. We thought a lot of our great men in those days. There is no bookshop there now. Only a bare, blank wall. And the posts that used to stretch across the street just beyond the vanished bookshop, prohibiting vehicular traffic from passing the entrance to Albany—they, too, have gone; and the rubber-tyred hansoms, with their jingling bells, ‘the gondolas of London’ Disraeli called them—where are they? Exiled, sent out to Cape Town, many of them, so I hear. They must feel singularly *dépaysés*. Now and again, at the rarest intervals, you may see some sad survivor trailing disconsolately along by the kerb, in Piccadilly or by the Green Park, hoping, I suppose, to tempt someone who lived and loved in the Nineties, and was something of a blood then, to try and

‘beget that golden time again’.

It is a strange but vivid sensation of freshness and light, as of a morning in Spring, that the thought of those days recalls. Do the ‘Seventies’ or the ‘Eighties’ have the same effect on those who remember them? Or is there indeed some special quality of sparkle and effervescence about the last decade of a century, that other decades lack? *Fin de siècle*—one grows a little sick of a phrase so oft repeated, yet it does seem to convey the suggestion of something a little daring, a hint of reckless, elegant abandon. It can hardly be denied, I think, that, at all events in literary and artistic circles, there was a sort of ferment, in those days. There was something in the air. The Golden Age was returning,

redeunt Saturnia regna.

The Golden Age! If only they could have looked forward twenty years or so into the future!

## THE STAGE AND THE PLAYERS

But now, at any rate,—I speak of '89 or '90—there was unmistakably some centripetal force at work, some mysterious, coactive influence that was grouping the various actors on the stage, the stage being a certain pretty well defined area in the West End of London: Lane from the Railway Clearing House, Mathews from his snug little bookshop in Cathedral Yard, Exeter (they were the two stage-managers), Beardsley from his insurance office, Le Gallienne from clerking it in Liverpool, Davidson from his schoolmastering in Scotland, Francis Thompson (the one decisively *great* figure of them all) from the gutter, Rothenstein from Bradford—all were arriving, or soon would be arriving, on that scene of which the centre, the focusing point, was the little bookshop in Vigo Street,—all these and many more, drawn by the hidden but irresistible influence of some magic power, were converging towards that stage on which they were destined to enact their several parts. That shop—what a poky little den it was! A room about sixteen feet square, lined from floor to ceiling with second-hand books—the ‘choice and rare editions’—which Mathews and Lane had contributed, each from his own collection, a wooden screen or partition behind which at a sloping desk sat Roland Clarke and myself perched on a couple of high stools. Clarke was the cashier and I the Idle Apprentice. Below our stools was a trap-door leading to the ‘usual offices’, a black, malodorous cellar into which no daylight ever penetrated, the home of beetles and spiders and other creatures of the night.

The beginning of the whole thing was that collection of poems by Richard Le Gallienne which he called *Volumes in Folio*, beautifully printed on hand-made paper, with untrimmed edges and bound as I have already

## THE CURTAIN-RAISER

described it. Over and above the two hundred and fifty copies of the ordinary edition, there were fifty copies on large paper. This was a conscious bid to titillate the appetite of the collector. Lane, if anyone, knew how to do that,—knew how to stimulate desire where it already existed, and how to create it where it did not. Lane's strong point was his enthusiasm—I believe it was always real. It was infectious, irresistible. The verses in *Volumes in Folio* did not set the Thames on fire. They were far from promising a new Keats or a new Shelley. They probably created no perceptible commotion among the poets in Elysium. Yet if they were trifles, they were at least melodious trifles, and they sang of love. But the great thing was that they came in such an alluring shape, such a seductive demureness, that no one could resist them. The two hundred and fifty copies, as well as the fifty copies on large paper, went in a twinkling. It was a sort of *lever de rideau*. The curtain had been rung up. The play had begun.

Before very long the *St. James's Gazette* was writing: 'To Messrs. Elkin Mathews and John Lane almost more than to any other, are the thanks of the grateful singer especially due; for it is they who have managed, by means of limited editions and charming workmanship, to impress book-buyers with the belief that a volume may have an æsthetic and commercial value. They have made it possible to speculate in the latest discovered poet, as in a new company,—with the difference that an operation in the former can be done with three half-crowns.' The *Sunday Sun* said that the books turned out by Mathews and Lane were 'models of artistic publishing' and yet were 'simplicity itself'. 'These publishers', wrote Katharine Tynan, 'produce books so

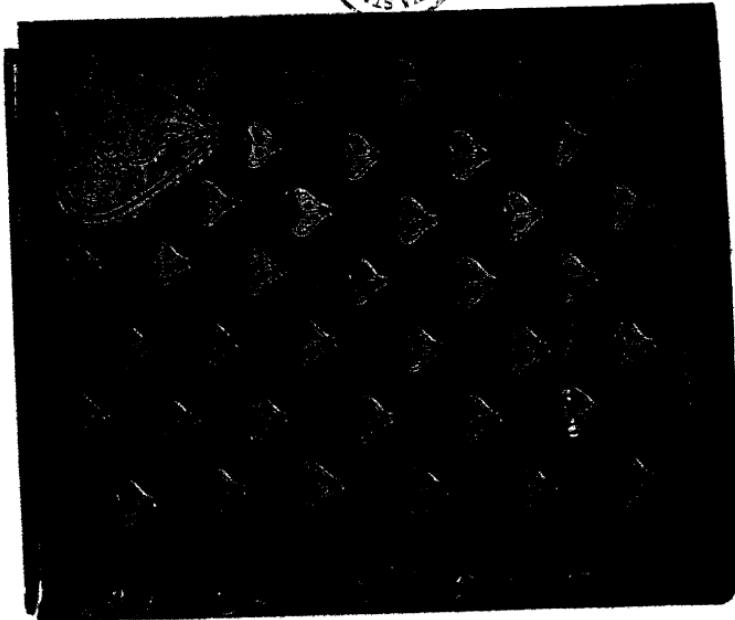
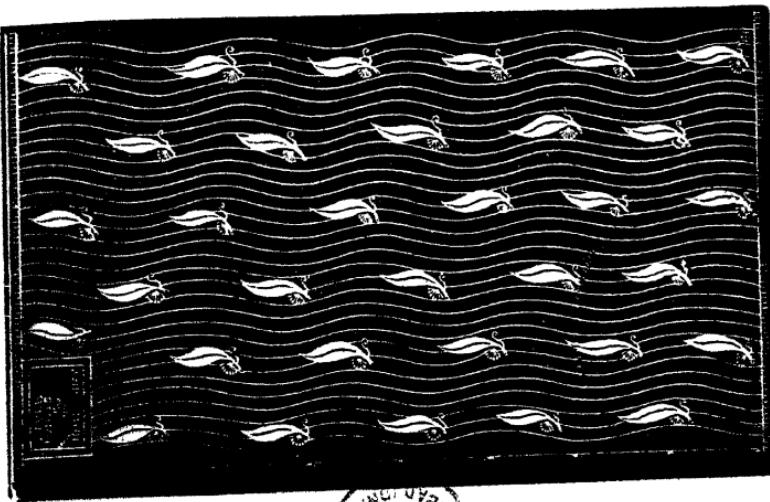
## LIMITED EDITIONS

delightfully that it must give an added pleasure to the hoarding of first editions.' The prices for the most part ranged from half a crown to five shillings; not too much, even for the rich. Of the eighty books or so that figured on the Bodley Head list in March, 1894, nearly half were in editions limited to a number of copies averaging three hundred and fifty, and in no case exceeding six hundred.

Lane, by this time, had acquired a very large circle of friends whom he visited, or with whom he corresponded. These—and their number was continually increasing—were to a large extent his public, people on whom he could count to buy, or at all events, to talk about his books. His limited editions he was thus pretty sure of 'placing' in advance. His publishing business, when it started, bore about as much resemblance to the commercial publishing houses of to-day as a City State of ancient Greece bears to France or to the United States of America.

It was in 1889 that Le Gallienne's *Volumes in Folio* was published. It was not until 1892 that Lane, having by this time severed his connexion with the Clearing House, added his name to the style of firm, which now became 'Elkin Mathews & John Lane: Publishers, and Vendors of Choice and Rare Editions in Belles Lettres'. Belles Lettres is that department of literature which implies culture and belongs to the domain of art. Mathews and Lane made a valiant, and not unsuccessful, effort to live up to this definition.

Anticipating a little, I will turn again to that list of March, 1894. The firm had now been in existence some six and a half years, of which two had been under the joint imprint. The names on their list—there were about a hundred in all—included Grant Allen, Laurence



BINDING DESIGNS BY C. S. RICKETTS FOR  
"POEMS DRAMATIC AND LYRICAL" BY LORD DE TABLEY, AND "SILVERPOINTS" BY JOHN GRAY



## A GOODLY COMPANY

Binyon, Walter Crane, John Davidson, Lord de Tabley, Kenneth Grahame, T. Gordon Hake, Ian Hamilton, Lionel Johnson, 'George Egerton', Richard Le Gallienne, Alice Meynell, Allan Monkhouse, J. T. Nettle-ship, James Ashcroft Noble, Ernest Rhys, G. S. Street, John Addington Symonds, Francis Thompson, Katharine Tynan, William Watson, Frederick Wedmore, Oscar Wilde. What new firm of these days, what firm of only six years' standing, can boast of a list like that, or anything approaching it? And I have made no mention of the artists by whom many of these books were illustrated and decorated: William Rothenstein, Selwyn Image, Walter Crane, Aubrey Beardsley, Laurence Housman, C. S. Ricketts, C. H. Shannon, Gleeson White, William Strang, Wilson Steer, C. W. Furse, R. Anning Bell.

It must have been about this time, I mean about the year 1889, that there occurred a little incident which, though it has nothing to do with publishing, throws some light on John Lane's character. Among my father's patients was a very big and powerful man who was a victim of the drink habit. All efforts to treat him privately having failed, it was decided that he would have to go to a home for inebriates. Hearing of this, Lane put forward the claims of his mother's institution at Kingswood. But Kingswood was a long way off, and the patient would have to travel with an attendant. Lane volunteered to be the attendant. Now Lane was a little man and the dipsomaniac towered above him; but Lane was undaunted, and off they went together. It was a hazardous undertaking, but they arrived at their destination without mishap. That was typical of Lane. He was afraid of nobody. The socially great had no terrors for him either. Being

### A DEVON YEOMAN

entirely free from any kind of inferiority complex, he made no attempt to appear 'bigger' than he was. He never sailed under false colours. He was the son of a Devon yeoman and he was proud of it.

## *Chapter VII*

### BEARDSLEY AND OTHERS

WITH THE possible exception of *The Yellow Book*, there is no name more intimately associated with the Nineties in general, or with John Lane in particular, than that of Aubrey Beardsley. If Francis Thompson was the one major poet of his time, Beardsley was incomparably its most brilliant artist, the only one among a host of talented rivals to whom we can unhesitatingly ascribe the quality of genius. But while Francis Thompson may be said to have been *in* that particular world, but not *of* it, Beardsley was, very emphatically, both in it and of it. He was indeed its conspicuous sign and symbol.

Naturally I saw and heard a great deal of Beardsley in the early and middle Nineties. Few were the days in which he did not put in an appearance, on some business or another, at the Bodley Head. Forty years have not dimmed my recollection of him. Other figures that enacted their more or less conspicuous parts on that fascinating scene may have grown faint and blurred; but Beardsley's image dwells as vividly in my memory as though I had seen him yesterday. Tall, emaciated, with a narrow, aquiline face, pale, with a skin of transparent, almost luminous pallor, rather light-brown hair parted in the middle, brushed flat down over the high forehead in a kind of fringe like a soldier's 'quiff', long, delicate,

## A GEM-LIKE FLAME

infinitely expressive hands—never have I seen such hands—a somewhat dandified eighteenth-century air, dressed in a tail-coat and top-hat, carrying a portfolio of his drawings under his arm—such was Aubrey Beardsley. For all the fragility of his appearance, he gave me the impression of extraordinary power. He seemed to be possessed of a tense, electrical energy, or atomic force, and to contain, in his sole tenuous frame, a nervous force that would have sufficed to animate the clay of a thousand ordinary men. Nevertheless, there was sometimes a strange stillness about him, a perfection of repose that had nothing to do with inertia or sluggish inaction. It was rather as if he was composed of atoms moving with such intense rapidity as to create the illusion of absolute tranquillity, a tranquillity resembling the delicate equilibrium of a variety of contending forces, something very different from the quiet arising from a mere cessation from action, as in death, or sleep. This quintessence of vital energy did not manifest itself in the vast and grandiose and monstrous, but, infinitely sublimated, bore fruit in the intricate, the delicate, the subtle, in the triumph of sweeping lines as beautiful and passionate as the long-drawn notes of a violin. It was not for nothing that, in a happy 'second intention', Osbert Burdett chose for the outward adornment of his book that wonderful curving line which Beardsley drew for the cover of Ernest Dowson's *Collected Poems*; for, if Beardsley sums up the decade which we call the Nineties, that design itself sums up Beardsley.

But this energy of his burned and glowed with a tragic intensity. Beardsley, at least to outward seeming, passed through no succession of growth, maturity and decline. Robert Ross describes him as 'an intellectual Marcellus suddenly matured'; and it is a fact that he swam

## THE PEDANTS COMPLAIN

unheralded into the artistic firmament of his time, shone there awhile with dazzling brightness, and then vanished as suddenly as he had come. In the narrow sense, he had little or no artistic training. He sprang in full panoply from the head of Zeus. Certainly, on the advice of Burne-Jones, he had attended the night-school of Professor Brown at Westminster and sustained no apparent ill from that experience. He was not one to profit greatly by academic instruction, to tread with docility the trodden paths of his art. It seems that he never set foot within the Royal Academy, though he loyally defended that institution, maintaining that he would rather be an Academician than an artist. 'It takes', he said, 'only one man to make an artist, but forty to make an Academician!' The pedants, of course, had many complaints to make, and pointed out his technical defects—'that hand or that foot was out of proportion to the body'—'that chair was clearly too small for any of the people in the picture to sit upon', and so forth. And Leighton, while professing admiration for his gifts, exclaimed, in tones of lofty compassion, 'Ah, if he could only draw!' Whereupon John Lane is said to have retorted, 'Sir Frederick, I am sick of seeing the work of men who "can only draw!"'

I am disposed to think that Beardsley sometimes tripped purposely, like the tight-rope walker, in order to accentuate the triumph of his skill, or to show his scorn of mere high-school perfection. He did not disdain, rather he never thought about, the correctness of the schools.

There has been more than a little discussion as to who 'discovered' Beardsley—Pennell, or Burne-Jones, or Dent, or John Lane, or who? The answer is—for

genius, like murder, will out—that Beardsley discovered himself. Still, there is no denying that he owed a great deal to John Lane, almost as much as Lane owed to him. If there had been no Lane, there would have been no *Yellow Book*, and if there had been no *Yellow Book*, 'the genius of Beardsley', as Osbert Burdett observes, 'would have missed its finest opportunity.'

Beardsley, as I say, discovered himself, though it took the glamour of the *Yellow Book* and Lane's genius as a *metteur en scène* completely to disengage him from the mists that surrounded him. Beardsley was in no doubt as to his own worth, as will be seen from these extracts from a letter he wrote to a friend from the Lombard Street Insurance Office where he was a clerk:

'I have just had a charming epistle, four pages, from Burne-Jones. He advises two schools; first, Mr. Brown's Academy at Westminster (impressionist), second, South Kensington. . . . Two hours' daily work is quite sufficient for me, so, as you suggest, I mean to attend night classes.' Sir Edward Burne-Jones gives him some salutary advice. 'I should like', he says, 'to see your work from time to time, at intervals, say, of three or six months. I know you will not fear work, nor let disheartenment languor you because the necessary discipline of the school seems to lie so far away from your natural interest and sympathy. You must learn the grammar of your art, and its exercises are all the better for being rigidly prosaic.' Then after an interval, how long it is impossible to say, for the letter like its predecessor is undated, he writes from 59 Charlwood Street, 'In Bed', to the same friend, an epistle which is a sort of pæan of triumph. 'Behold me,' he cries, 'the coming man, the rage of artistic London, the admired of all schools, the besought of publishers, the subject of articles! Last summer I

## THE 'MORTE D'ARTHUR'

struck for myself an entirely new method of drawing and composition, something suggestive of Japan, but not really jpanesque. Words fail me to describe the quality of the workmanship. The subjects were quite mad and a little indecent. Strange, hermaphroditic creatures wandering about in Pierrot costumes or modern dress; quite a new world of my own creation. I took them over to Paris with me and got great encouragement from Puvis de Chavannes, who introduced me as "un jeune artiste anglais qui fait des choses étonnantes". I was not a little pleased, I can tell you, with my success.'

'On returning to England, I continued working in the same method, only making developments. The style culminated in a large picture of "Siegfried" (which to-day hangs in Burne-Jones's drawing-room).

'My next step was to besiege the publishers, all of whom opened their great stupid eyes pretty wide. They were frightened, however, of anything so new and so daringly original. One of them (Dent—lucky dog!) saw his chance and put me on to a large *édition de luxe* of Malory's "Morte d'Arthur". . . . The work I have already done for Dent has simply made my name. Subscribers crowd from all parts. William Morris has sworn a terrible oath against me for daring to bring out a book in his manner. The truth is that, while *his* work is mere imitation of old stuff, mine is fresh and original. Anyhow, all the good critics are on my side.' Then follows a record of further successes. 'Lawrence and Bullen have given me the *Vera Historia* of Lucian. I am illustrating this entirely in my new manner, or, rather, a development of it. The drawings are certainly the most extraordinary things that have ever appeared in a book. . . . They are also the most indecent. . . . Joseph Pennell has just written a grand article on me

## BEARDSLEY THE VOGUE

in the forthcoming number of "The Studio" . . . I should blush to quote the article. . . . My weekly work in the "Pall Mall Budget" has created some astonishment. . . . I have already far outdistanced the old men at that sort of thing (caricature and wash-work). . . . My portrait of Irving made the old black-and-white duffers sit up; and my portrait of Verdi, this week, will make them sit up even more. . . . I have fortune at my foot. Daily I wax greater in facility of execution. . . . I still cling to the last principles of the P.R.B. and am still the beloved of Burne-Jones.' In conclusion, he exhorts his friend not to be 'a fixture in the land of the Philistines'. 'Come out', he says, 'from among them if you can manage it. England after all is the place for oof and fame!—a sentiment he illustrates with a drawing of the rising sun and a bag marked £. s. d.' In a postscript he adds, 'I'm to have a grand show of my work at the New English Art Club in the Spring.' And so Beardsley became the vogue. He made everybody 'sit up'. Not to have heard of Beardsley was to be a barbarian.

For Beardsley, John Lane always entertained the liveliest admiration and affection. Despite the injustice Lane was forced to inflict on him over the Wilde affair, they remained friends to the end. Beardsley's letters to his friend and publisher are full of animation and boyish fun. Here is one dated from 114 Cambridge Street and written on the eve of the publication of Volume 1 of the *Yellow Book*:

'Yes, my dear Lane, I shall most assuredly commit suicide if the fat woman does not appear in No. 1 of the *Yellow Book*. I have shown it to all sorts and conditions of men—and women. All agree that it is one of my best

114, CAMBRIDGE STREET,

S.W.

Dear Lane 3  
shall most  
assuredly commit  
suicide if the fat  
woman does not appear  
in N° 1 of the Yellow  
Book.

I have shown it to  
all sorts & conditions  
of men — & women  
all agree that it is  
one of my next best.

**H**eights & extremely witty.

Really I am sure you know





## A PICTORIAL LETTER

efforts and extremely witty. Really I am sure you have nothing to fear. I should not press the matter a second if I thought it would give offence. The block is such a capital one too, and looks so distinguished. The picture shall be called, "A Study in Major Lines".

"It cannot possibly hurt anybody's sensibilities. Do say "yes". I shall hold demonstrations in Trafalgar Square if you don't, and brandish a banner bearing the device, "England expects every publisher to do his duty". Now don't drive me into the depths of despair. Really I am quite serious. The second Mrs. T. has come off splendidly. Annan and Swan will finish it in two or three days.

'The Furse portrait looks A1.

'Yours,

'AUBREY BEARDSLEY.'

This letter is illustrated by Beardsley with a portrait of himself in a lachrymose condition pointing to a noose suspended from a gallows, by means of which he threatens to carry out his fell intention. In September, 1893, Lane was in Paris, where he saw a good deal of William Rothenstein. 'Dear and Reverend Sir,' writes Beardsley, 'I hope that William Rothenstein has done no more than take you to the *Chat Noir* in the daytime, and shown you the outside of the *Moulin Rouge*. I am going to "Jimmie's" on Thursday night, dressed up as a tart and mean to have a regular spree. I suppose you will be back at the "Tête de Bodley" next week looking a gay and garish Parisian. Love and best wishes to the future P.R.A.'

For readers of this generation it may be as well to mention that 'Jimmie's' was the St. James's Restaurant, which, together with St. James's Hall, was subsequently

## SOME HAUNTING SADNESS

demolished. This letter was illustrated with three very lively sketches, the first depicting John Lane and William Rothenstein in Paris; the second, Beardsley himself as a woman; the third, John Lane as a Frenchman.

The tone of these letters is what the Victorians used to call a little 'fast'. How far Beardsley 'went the pace' in regard to the 'sex', I do not know. I think he was tinged pretty deeply with the sort of morbid eroticism which is usually associated with the disease that carried him off. I remember his coming into the Bodley Head and telling us about a 'wanton' he had just seen in Regent Street, expatiating on her visible, and speculating on her invisible, charms in embarrassing detail. I suspect that his dissoluteness was largely mental. Nor must the letters I have just quoted be taken as characteristic of the real Beardsley, or at any rate of the whole Beardsley. There was a profoundly melancholy side to his nature. He was as a taper flaming away within a globe of oxygen. Consumptives, they say, are usually optimistic about themselves. They are always thinking they are going to recover. This, in a way, was so with Beardsley, and yet, deep down, I think he had the presentiment, perhaps the certainty, that his life would be a short one. Beneath his gay and careless exterior, there was something 'on which his melancholy sat on brood'. He was like the reveller in Ernest Dowson's *Cynara*, flinging roses with the throng, dancing to put some haunting sadness out of mind.

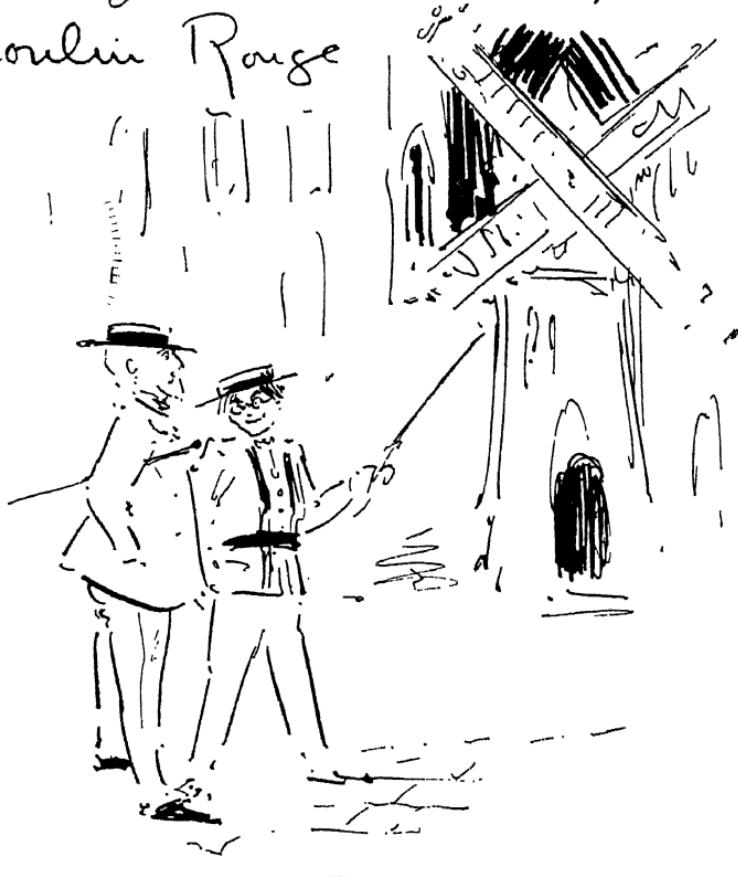
If Pater's portrayal of Watteau is a true one, how many are the points of resemblance between him and Aubrey Beardsley! For example: 'There is a sort of seemly thought—*le bel sérieux*—about him which makes me think of those grave old Dutch statesmen in their youth, such as that famous William the Silent.' How well, in

114 Cambridge St-  
Warwick Sq  
SW

Dear Reverend Sir

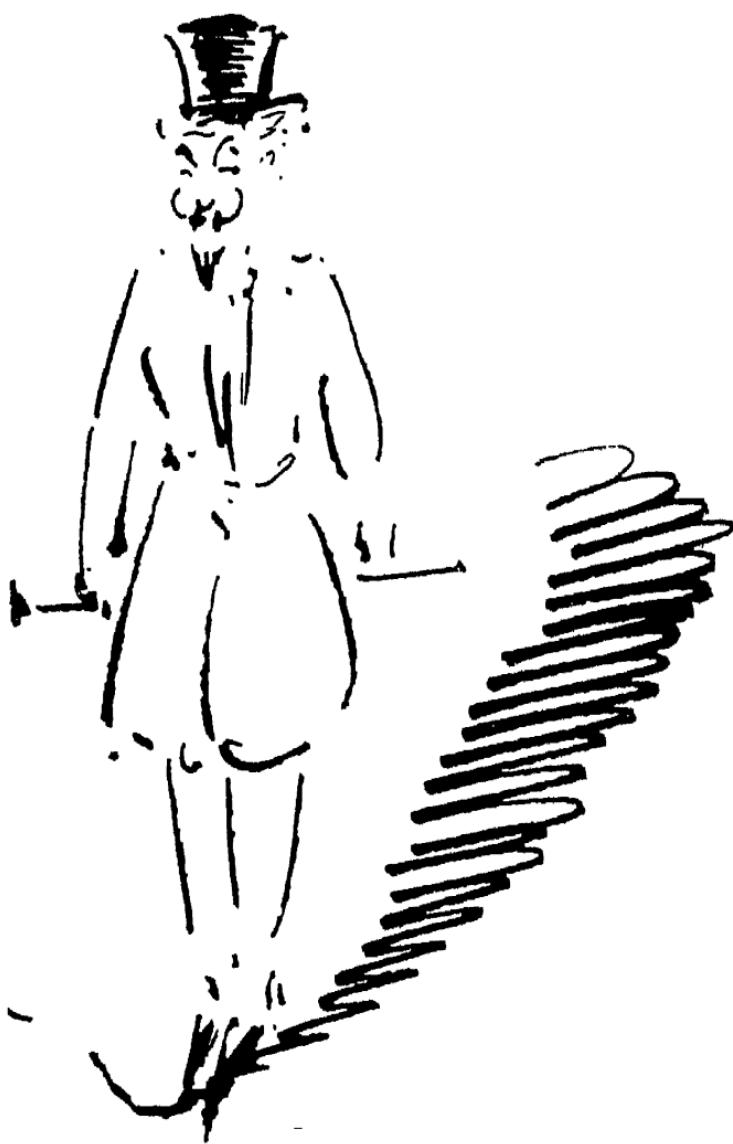
I went round to  
Goupil this morning. It  
seems that Pennell is  
no longer in Paris, & from  
my sister's accounts this seems  
to be the case, so we shall  
not just yet have the pleasure  
& privilege of his criticisms.

I hope that William  
R. Hensten has done no  
more than take you to the  
chat noir in the day time &  
shown you the outside of the  
Moulin Rouge



I am going to Jummies on  
Thursday night I dressed  
up as a tart & mean to  
have a regular spree





## A COMPARISON WITH WATTEAU

one of his pensive moods, would that have fitted Beardsley. And again, of Antony's 'new manner':

'I am unable even to divine it—to conceive the trick and effect of it at all. Only, something of lightness and coquetry I discern there, at variance, methinks, with his own singular gravity and even sadness of mien and mind.' Would not this comment apply to Beardsley and the new 'Japanesque' style of which he was so proud?

There is a strain of irony that informs nearly all Beardsley's work, not merely where his purpose is obviously satiric, as in *The Wagnerites*, for example, but even in those drawings where his intention seems but to bring out in detail the grace and elegance of a scene, as in his illustrations to *The Rape of the Lock*. But, like Watteau, he portrays all that artifice and elegance, all those 'vain and perishable graces', with so much spirit, 'partly because, after all, he looks down upon it or despises it. For him, to understand must be to despise them, while he nevertheless undergoes their fascination.' Thus speaks Pater of Watteau, but does it not explain the irony, the attitude of amused contempt which Osbert Burdett recognises as underlying all Beardsley's maturer work?

The shadows began to descend upon him. He is still devoted to his work, but his spirit yearns for brighter and sunnier climes. And then the call which came to so many of the young and gifted men of those times—artists and poets—came to Beardsley also. On the 31st March, 1897, he made his submission to the Catholic Church. 'The sincerity of his religious convictions', says his friend, Robert Ross, 'has been affirmed by those who were with him constantly . . . the flippancy and careless nature of his conversation were superficial: he was always strict in his religious observances. Among his intimate friends through life were clergymen and

## BEARDSLEY'S DEATH

priests who have paid tribute to the reality and sincerity of his belief.' After his reception, Beardsley seemed to gain strength and moved to Paris, but the improvement was short-lived. He never saw England again. In a pathetic letter, undated, he writes to Lane as follows:

'I wonder whether you would care to have a copy of the photograph Cameron took of me when I was in town. I am sending you one by this post.

'I have had another bad return of hæmorrhage. I am only just convalescent. The doctor is sending me further south and I start to-day for a warmer climate. Beaulieu (near Monte Carlo) is the place I have been advised to go to. It is quite useless to attempt to winter in England. In the meantime, till I have settled down, my address is 4, Royal Arcade, W.

'With kindest regards from my mother and myself,  
'Yours very sincerely,

'AUBREY BEARDSLEY.

'My mother will be with me.'

'On March 23rd, 1898,'—I quote the words of Robert Ross—'he received the last sacraments; and on the 25th, with perfect resignation, in the presence of his mother and sister, to whom he confided messages of love and sympathy to his many friends, Aubrey Beardsley passed away.'

Beardsley's art has evoked extremes of praise and denunciation. 'Among artists and men of letters,' says Ross, whose words are indeed infused with that 'love and sympathy' which, as with his dying breath, Beardsley bequeathed to his friends, 'no less than with that great inartistic body, "the art-loving public", Aubrey Beardsley's name will always call forth wonder, admiration, speculation and contempt. It should be conceded, how-



AUBREY BEARDSLEY



## THE MYSTERIOUS ROSE GARDEN

ever, that his work cannot appeal to everyone; and that many who have the highest perception of the beautiful see only the repulsive and unwholesome in the troubled, exotic expression of his genius. . . . Artists and critics have already dwelt on the beauty of Aubrey Beardsley's line, which in his early work too often resolved itself into mere calligraphy; but the mature and perfect illustrations to *Salome* and *The Rape of the Lock* evince a mastery unsurpassed by any artist in any age or country.<sup>1</sup> That was from one who knew him intimately, who had come under the charm of his irresistible personality. But one who knew him not, one of a later generation, has been moved to write of one of his pictures a page comparable to that in which Pater records the emotion awakened in him by the *Mona Lisa* of Leonardo da Vinci. In these sensitive words, Mr. Osbert Burdett sets down his impressions of *The Mysterious Rose Garden* of Aubrey Beardsley:

'In that beautiful drawing . . . we can see a symbol of the artistic instinct of the century set in the cultivated garden of the time, which first subdued and then was to be questioned by itself. The rose-garden was the Victorian parterre in which the spirit of imagination was domesticated, and employed to beautify and delight its contented guardians. A virgin art she was, protected from all disturbing influences, and allowed to wander, like another Eve, in this sanctified precinct that had been retrieved from nature. The soul of the girl was asleep while her body grew, and it was in this state of innocence that her parents delighted. Nature—nature, that is to say, in this carefully cultivated garden—had no fears for them or for her, but they forgot that, though mankind may subdue the flowers of the field to the selective fancy of the gardener, it is yet only imposing a particular form

## THE LISTENING VIRGIN

upon an essential energy that eludes him. Nature in a garden is nature still. So at length it chanced that when this virgin one summer day was walking against the rose-trellis, the petals of the flowers open as they dozed intoxicated with their own scent in the summer heat, her soul awoke within her; a thrill ran through her body from the same sun, and she became aware of the voice of her instincts which whispered curious questions almost audibly in her ears. They told her that beyond this small garden was a more adventurous world, with trees and wild flowers and forest things, of which the garden contained only a selection of tamed varieties; but that the spirit of the wild no less than that of the tame was also in herself, and that to follow this spirit was to live and to deny it was to die. She had heard of sin and temptation, but only of them as ugly and uninviting things, and it was impossible to believe that the adventure to which she was being beckoned in such magically sympathetic tones bore any resemblance to the ugly voices of which her parents had told her. She listened: every tissue in her body tingled in unison with these voices. Her awakening nature responded as it had not responded to anything that she had heard previously, and yet there was a pause, a delicious moment of suspense, a passing suspicion of misgiving. We are shown no more in this design than the roses, the figured voice, and the listening virgin, but we know she is destined to yield, and that in the moment of yielding she had become a different creature, mysteriously deeper than the child of yesterday. The forces that have wrought this miracle are forces of freedom and growth. It is conventional art listening to the whisper of creative imagination in the familiar and formal garden of Victorian times; it is the return of Pan, the repudiation of

## A MIRACLE OF DESIGN

authority. The waters of its marble fountain have been troubled by an angel, and the sheltered pool is endued with alien life. If it has stood too long deserted by the spirit, it will have grown stagnant, and the stirring of the scum upon its surface will be the first sign of the presence of the angel's wings. Thus it was with the Romantic movement and with the decadence with which the century closed, a decadence that affected, but neither explains nor created, the genius that chanced to flower upon it. The decadence was an accident of the time; the genius was above it, but genius has no power over the moment of its birth.'

It might be said of this—as was said of Pater's musings on the *Mona Lisa* of Leonardo—that 'twere to consider too curiously to consider so', and, indeed, it is likely that few will read into this picture all that Mr. Burdett beholds in it. Beardsley was a genius, and this drawing is a striking product of his art and his inspiration. But there is a hierarchy of genius, and this is like bestowing on a Scarlatti the praise that is the due of a Beethoven. It is a marvellous design—Mr. Burdett himself refers to it as a design—but whether it is permissible to invest it with all the complex moral implications that Mr. Burdett beholds in it, I venture to think is doubtful. How perfect it is as a design may, as Mr. Burdett himself has pointed out to me, be shown by obscuring the black lamp. At once the effect is fatally undone.

In the iconography appended to Robert Ross's monograph on Beardsley, this picture is described as a burlesque Annunciation. It might also stand for a sort of Satanic representation of the *Sto ad ostium et pulso*; a burlesque of Holman Hunt.

That Beardsley was a great, a very great artist, even Whistler, who had hated him and his work, was at length

## A STORY OF WHISTLER

forced to admit. How this came about is related in *The Life of James McNeill Whistler*, by Elizabeth and Joseph Pennell. This is the story:

‘One night when Whistler was with us, Beardsley turned up, as always when he went to see anyone, with his portfolio of his latest work under his arm. This time it held the illustrations for *The Rape of the Lock* which he had just made. Whistler, who always saw everything that was being done, had seen *The Yellow Book*, started in 1894, and he disliked it as much as he then disliked Beardsley, who was the art editor; but he had also seen the illustrations to *Salome*, disliking them too, probably because of Oscar Wilde; he knew many of the other drawings, one of which, whether intentionally or unintentionally, was more or less a reminiscence of Mrs. Whistler, and he no doubt knew that Beardsley had made a caricature of him which a follower carefully left in a cab. When Beardsley opened the portfolio, and began to show us *The Rape of the Lock*, Whistler looked at them first indifferently, then with interest, then with delight. And then he said slowly: “Aubrey, I have made a very great mistake—you are a very great artist.” And the boy burst out crying. All Whistler could say, when he could say anything, was “I mean it—I mean it—I mean it”.

His panegyrists and detractors have by this time said their best and their worst about Aubrey Beardsley. In spite of both, his position as an artist in the temple of fame is secure. Mr. Osbert Burdett aptly sums up the position when he says, ‘His art is the principal product of his time, perhaps the only product of which we never weary, the suggestions and beauty being as inexhaustible as the resource that created them.’

In other times and in other circumstances, this youth

## WILL ROTHENSTEIN

with the clear-cut profile of a Dante might have been a novice in a Benedictine monastery, set to illumine Missals and Books of Hours, and adorning them with designs of such incredible loveliness as to hold the Brethren spellbound with admiration. I can imagine him, in his austere monastic habit, walking in the garden at sundown, with the light of evening in his face, among flowers as rich as those with which he had embellished so many a page. And, indeed, the closing weeks of his brief and feverish existence were wrapt in a calm that may be compared with that. *Requiem aeternam dona ei, Domine, et lux perpetua luceat ei.*

In spite of a certain sedateness which, I understand, the growing years, his professorship and his knighthood have conferred upon him, Will Rothenstein is in essence the same winning personality, the same delightful *raconteur* that he was when I listened to his discourse in those far-away Nineties. Of his work as an artist it would scarcely become me to speak, nevertheless if I may be permitted to offer my poor obolary tribute I would say that for subtlety of interpretation and delicacy of craftsmanship the art of portraiture could scarcely go further than in that wonderful series of lithographs, his 'Oxford Characters'.

It was Rothenstein, I think, who was chiefly, if not solely, responsible for the visit which Verlaine paid to this country in 1895, when he delivered a course of lectures in Oxford and London. 'Verlaine', he wrote to Lane in an undated letter headed 'Café de la Rochefoucauld', 'thought you the most intelligent publisher he has ever had anything to do with and is sending you MSS. to

morrow. He is feeling better and is simply hatching poems, he says. I am taking him Rossetti's poems, as he very much wants to read them. I gave him five francs when I left, and he was perfectly delighted.' And here is an extract from another letter, also written from France, containing an apophthegm which, as a *père de famille*, he might now be disposed to modify: 'I am working five hours a day, a fairly big canvas. My model bores me very much—women, except for posing, should only commence to live after seven o'clock at night. Stuart Merrill came in last night and we were very gay. . . .'

The number and diversity of the artists whom Lane knew and who worked for him, is bewildering and a mere catalogue of their names and of the books they illustrated for *The Bodley Head* would fill a chapter, and that a long one. I shall take them as they come into my head, without making any attempt to classify or arrange them chronologically. Next, then, let me speak of Edmund Herbert New, whose illustrations to White's *Selborne* and Walton's *Compleat Angler* are a possession to Englishmen for ever.

*The Bodley Head* has known artists who attained a wider celebrity than E. H. New, artists who had the power of forcing their own *ego*, their own daring or extravagant personality upon the attention of the public. This, Edmund New did not do, and did not want to do. Success of this showy kind he neither achieved, nor attempted to achieve. His art, like the nature which his letters reveal, is modest and retiring, quiet and pensive. He is a lover of those sequestered scenes of pleasant pastoral life, *secura quies et nescia fallere vita*, which his pencil portrayed with such patient and loving care and which, in these noisy, mechanical days, seem fated rapidly to disappear. Lane had a great affection

D. Y. CAMERON

and admiration for him, and he for Lane. 'I shall always remember', he writes to Lane from Waltham, when he was doing his illustrations for the *Compleat Angler*, 'I shall always remember those visits to "G.1" (Albany) and my first introduction into the Literary and Artistic circles of London, with peculiar pleasure. As I think of your charming little sitting-room and the notable men and women whom you receive there, I see before me a small quarto volume which shall rival the "Macleise Gallery" in interest, containing biographies of these celebrities and portraits, written and illustrated by themselves.'

Another artist with whom Lane carried on a more or less regular correspondence was D. Y. Cameron. 'How very kind of you', writes Cameron from Cairo, in 1909, 'to send me the "Aubrey Beardsley"—most acceptable—most welcome. . . . Beardsley interests me so much. . . . How much you had to do with the introduction of Beardsley to the public—which reminds me of my early acquaintance with you, when you were full of him and his work.'

Writing from his Scottish home, many years later, during the War, he says, 'We thank you most warmly for your good wishes and for "Phillips" (Stephen Phillips) with all there is in it of vision and power, which leads us to regret so deeply his passing into the shadows. . . . The best of wishes to Mrs. Lane and yourself, and a year as free from trouble and sorrow as is possible to wish for a friend, when all around seems so full of anxiety. . . . From northern, snow-swept heights we greet you.'

Who is Alastair? No one knows; not even—it is hinted—Alastair himself. But there are many rumours.

One is that he has royal blood in his veins. Some hot-headed Bavarian prince is supposed to have indulged in amorous dalliance with a pretty Irish girl, and Alastair is said to have been the offspring of this romantic but irregular union. His movements are erratic, incalculable, and as mysterious as his origin. He will suddenly arrive in London, or in Paris, nobody knows whence, and then vanish again, as suddenly as he came, nobody knows whither—into the clouds—into the void. And nobody, and nothing, may follow on his traces—not even the money that is owing to him. Something sinister, a fate worse than Actæon's would befall anyone who succeeded in tracking him down and in plucking the heart out of his mystery. Alastair was a particularly welcome guest at Lancaster Gate Terrace, and his letters to the Lanes bear witness to a strong affection on the part of the writer for them both.

'How extremely kind of you', he to Mrs. Lane in a letter undated and (characteristically) lacking the address of the sender, 'to answer my letter to Mr. Lane yourself. Thank you so much. The black Madonna will smile to you—because you like to have her under your roof. There exists quite a number of black Saints—especially black images of the Holy Virgin. Some of these are blackened by age or fire. But the more important ones have always been black. Few people know why. Many reasons have been given. The true reason is—the glory of the suns cannot be painted. The glorious features of the Madonna therefore have been represented eaten up by blackness. Like the brightness is hidden by blackness [*sic*] if you look at it too long. Ten days ago, I went to an arch-old chapel near Fuysing in Bavaria, consecrated to one of the most curious saints of the

## ARTIST AND FARMER

Catholic Church: Die heilige Kummernis—holy sorrow, a woman with a gilded beard. The truth is the great goddess Astarte or Ashtaroth is hidden under the changed name and attitude of “holy sorrow”. Do you remember the charming legend of the danseur de Notre-Dame? The original Saint was not the Virgin, but “holy sorrow”, who dropped the jewelled slipper. What a lovely time you must have had up in Scotland. I was sincerely happy to hear of your—Mr. Lane’s—welfare. Please if you write give my love to dear Mrs. Eichberg. How is Miss Roberts’s address? I lost it. Dear Mrs. Lane, do not forget.

‘ALASTAIR.’

A very different sort of character is Maxfield Parrish, the illustrator, or one of the illustrators, of Kenneth Grahame’s *The Golden Age*, and *Dream Days*. Some of the stories that afterwards composed *The Golden Age* first appeared in a collection of miscellaneous essays and sketches, reprinted from the *National Observer* and other periodicals under the title *Pagan Papers*. It had a title-page—an unforgettable one—designed by Aubrey Beardsley. Maxfield Parrish, an American, seems to have combined the interests of a farmer with those of an artist. In a letter, dated May 1st, written from his country home, Windsor, Vermont, he says: ‘Your letter should have had a reply long before this, but just now is our busy time out of doors, putting up fences, setting out trees, tethering the red cow, looking after the young chicks and wondering what in thunder to do with the sitting hens. I fear I cannot think of any new work for a while. . . .’

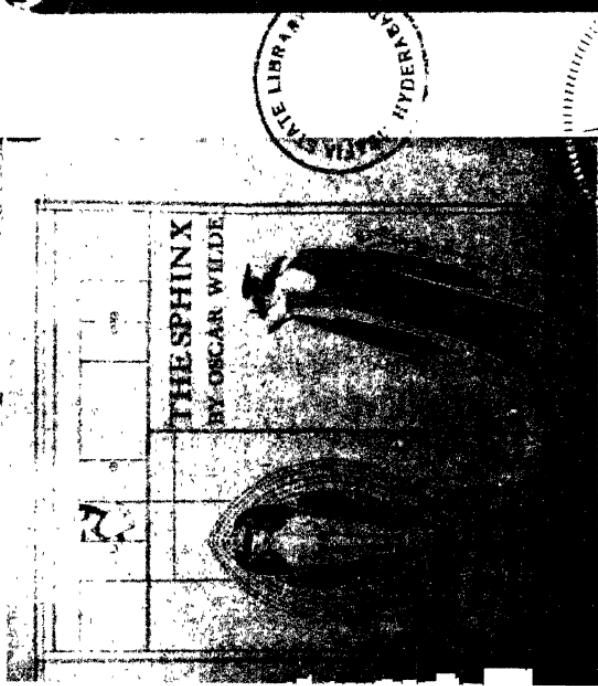
Those who have seen them (many of the originals used to hang in the dining-room at Lancaster Gate Terrace)

## WALTER CRANE

will not need to be reminded how beautiful, how strong yet delicate is the work of this planter of trees who must needs see to his red cow and sitting-hens before he would consent to dream his dreams and give them form in line and colour. 'Mr. Parrish', said Hubert Herkomer in a report upon his illustrations to *The Golden Age*, has absorbed, yet purified, every modern oddity and added to it his own strong, original identity. He has combined the photographic vision with the pre-Raphaelite feeling. He is poetic without ever being maudlin, and he has the saving clause of humour. He can give suggestiveness without loss of unflinching detail. He has a strong sense of romance. He has great sense of characterisation without a touch of ugliness. He can be modern, mediæval or classic. He has been able to infuse into the most uncompromising realism the decorative element—an extraordinary feat in itself. He is throughout an excellent draughtsman and his finish is almost phenomenal. Altogether this original artist is the strangest mixture I have ever met with. . . . He will do much to reconcile the extreme and sober elements of our times.'

Another famous illustrator associated with *The Bodley Head* was Walter Crane, whose Toy Books were taken over by Lane from Messrs. Routledge. John Lane seems to have become acquainted with Walter Crane in or about the year 1892, but many years before that Crane's fame had crossed the Channel and was praised by an illustrious writer who was himself destined, later on, to become associated with *The Bodley Head*. In the dialogue on fairy tales at the end of *My Friend's Book* will be found the following reference to Walter Crane. Says Raymond, one of the characters in the dialogue:

'I was in your little girl's room just now, looking at one



BINDING DESIGNS BY C. S. RICKETTS FOR  
'THE SPHINX' BY OSCAR WILDE, AND 'IN  
THE KEY OF BLUE' BY JOHN ADDINGTON  
SYMONDS



### 'SILVERPOINTS'

of the coloured picture-books which Walter Crane, the Englishman, illuminates with such a wealth of fantasy and humour. He is possessed of an imagination which combines the qualities of homeliness and learning. He has a true feeling for what is legendary and a love for the realities of life: he reveres the past and enjoys the present. His is essentially the English outlook.'

Except for the learning, this description of what Crane was in his work may be applied *verbatim* to what Lane was in his life. He was homely with a true feeling for the legendary, and of no one could it be more truly said, that he revered the past and enjoyed the present.

Crane was a poet as well as an artist. The frontispiece and thirty-eight designs by which his book of verses *Renascence* is illustrated, are among the finest specimens of his work.

It would be impossible to think of those early days of *The Bodley Head* and not to remember C. S. Ricketts and C. H. Shannon, who, jointly and severally, were responsible for some of the most notable work ever turned out by the firm. There was, for example, Marlowe and Chapman's *Hero and Leander* with borders, initials and illustrations designed and engraved on the wood by C. S. Ricketts and C. H. Shannon, bound in English vellum and gold which was limited to 200 copies. Two of the most beautiful and, at least in their format, most characteristic Bodley books were John Addington Symonds's *In the Key of Blue*, and Oscar Wilde's *The Sphinx*. The very striking cover design of the former was by Ricketts, and the latter was decorated by him in line and colour and the cover was also by him. Perhaps an even more notable specimen of his work was the cover design to *Silverpoints*, by John Gray, of which we have already spoken.

## LAURENCE HOUSMAN

Another artist of first-rate importance at this time closely associated with *The Bodley Head* was Laurence Housman, who was—and is—not only an artist but a poet, playwright and critic of great distinction. He did a good deal of designing for Mathews and Lane, but nothing more memorable than the frontispiece and title-page for the first volume of Francis Thompson's *Poems*. He performed a similar office for Thompson's *Sister Songs*. Someone—it may have been Lane himself—having asked for an explanation of the symbolism of the frontispiece to the second of these volumes, Housman replied with the following illuminating letter:

‘The full figure in my drawing represents a human soul bound among thorns and roses to the doorway of life. At his touch the roses of pleasure crumble and fall; pleasure has become suffering; this I have ventured to suggest under the form of crucifixion, as I wished to put in contrast the crucified sinner and the crucified Sinless One.

‘To the left is a figure that represents man's lower nature, once the tempter, and now the scoffer at the soul's sufferings. He holds the wine cup and the thyrsus.

‘In the latter my idea has been to give a parallel to the sponge set upon a reed in which the vinegar was offered to Christ.

‘To the right sits Nature or Flora, a neutral figure, capable for good or evil, holding Pan's pipes among a lap full of flowers. But behind her stands St. Eustace's Stag, representing Nature's spiritual side and the revelation, through Nature, of Christ. This touch, so strong in “The Hound of Heaven”, seems to me to be everywhere in Thompson's writing.

## A LAMENTABLE FATE

'The pair of doves flying toward the soul's heart as messengers of comfort hardly require any explanation in connexion with the present volume.

'My difficulty, I found, was to illustrate the whole book. If I illustrated one section, I ignored the other: and indeed, from the merely incidental point of view the poems seem to me to be only the means for giving expression to a very inward and spiritual line of thought, difficult to state, even in allegory and symbolism, but impressive and extremely personal.

'I was the less unwilling to attempt my somewhat personal reading as Thompson has himself been so much more personal in his expression throughout the poems.

'There are one or two smaller touches, such as the leafless and barren thorns girding the loins into which I need not perhaps enter. I think I have given you a sufficiently general view of the meaning of the whole.

'Yours very truly,  
'LAURENCE HOUSMAN.'

A lamentable fate overtook this beautiful picture. For some inexplicable reason Lane got it into his head, or had it put there, that the drawing was indecent, and another picture to take its place was hurriedly designed by the justly annoyed and bewildered artist. The original drawing, divorced from its context, was subsequently published in *The Yellow Book* (Vol. 10, July, 1896) under the not very satisfactory title 'Barren Life'.

Other illustrators and decorators belonging to this period were Selwyn Image, J. Illingworth Kay, Gleeson White, John Fulleylove and R. Anning Bell. There will be others and notable ones to be mentioned later on. Here I am confining myself to the earliest years—to the 'primal burst of bloom'. Nevertheless, early or late,

the artists who leap to the mind when one speaks of John Lane or the Nineties are Beardsley, Rothenstein, Ricketts and Shannon. Edmund New—though he has no characteristic or mannerism that would brand him as of the age—is nevertheless associated with Lane's firm by one thing, and that is the delightful little picture of the premises which used to decorate the catalogues emanating from *The Bodley Head*.

A few years ago when my old friend Henry Davray was awarded the Legion of Honour, some of his friends entertained him at a complimentary lunch at the Café Royal. I undertook to 'place' the company, which was numerous. I remember there were a good number of Bodley Head artists. In the innocence of my heart, I thought the obvious thing to do was to put them all together. Never in my life did I make a more grievous mistake. I think everyone of the dozen artists who were there came up to me after it was all over and told me—each in his own style of invective, but with a painful unanimity of condemnation—what he thought of my tactlessness. I thus became a sadder and a wiser man. My candid soul was henceforth darkened by the knowledge that artists, like writers and especially poets, do not always 'hit it off' together, and that jealousy is a passion by no means unknown among them.

'Tantaene animis colestibus irae!'

## *Chapter VIII*

### THE YELLOW BOOK

IT HAS long been held that *The Yellow Book* owed its origin to a banquet held in February, 1894, under the presidency of Mr. Waldorf Astor (afterwards Lord Astor), in honour of Bill Nye, a popular American humorist. John Lane, Henry Harland and Aubrey Beardsley were among the company. After the banquet the three of them repaired to the Hogarth Club, where they met George Moore, Frank Harris and M. H. Spielmann. The talk turned upon literary criticism and the comparative merits of French and English critics. Moore and Harris maintained that criticism worthy of the name simply did not exist in England. John Lane, citing the names of Richard Garnett, Andrew Lang, Churton Collins, George Saintsbury William Archer, Edmund Gosse, Richard Le Gallienne, Arthur Symons, Arthur Waugh and some others, stoutly upheld the contrary. Beardsley was disposed to agree that, at any rate, there were no art critics in England except Joseph Pennell, and he was an American. In the end, Moore and Harris appear to have carried the day, and, in spite of Lane, it seems to have been agreed not only that there were no critics, but no reviews of any real significance in England.

'Look here, Lane,' they said, 'why don't *you* start a really first-rate, up-to-date review?'

## BIRTH OF 'THE YELLOW BOOK'

And Lane, more in jest than in earnest (as he himself afterwards admitted), agreed to do so, on condition that Harland should be the literary, and Beardsley the art, editor. To this they consented, not at all reluctantly.

It was long after midnight when the meeting broke up, the two editors-elect having agreed to meet Lane at eleven o'clock that same morning at *The Bodley Head* there to discuss the scheme in detail.

Such were the circumstances, as I have always heard them described, which led to the foundation of *The Yellow Book*. I cannot confirm them on oath, because I was not there to see and hear. But I can affirm without fear of contradiction that, one morning in the February of 1894, there was great excitement at *The Bodley Head*. Lane came bustling in, and, soon after, Harland and Beardsley followed. A little later, they all three swept out again, as though whirled away by a gust of wind, Lane armed with a mass of material consisting of specimens of type, paper and cloth which he had managed to get together that morning. They were bound for the Hogarth. There, in about as long as it takes to smoke three or four cigarettes, the name and *format* of the new publication were decided upon. Even a provisional list of contributors was drawn up. Some good genius whispered simultaneously into the ears of the triumvirate that their review should appear in yellow. It was a momentous decision.

Though that is the story I have as it were grown up with, it is not the only one. No less a person than Mr. D. S. MacColl has, I believe, somewhere put it on record that the idea of *The Yellow Book* was originally his, and that he made a present of it to Harland. If so, then what Lane in his innocence believed to be mere chance, was in fact a very skilfully premeditated 'im-

#### ANOTHER VERSION

promptu'. Again, Mr. Arthur Waugh in his volume of reminiscences, *One Man's Road*, claims to have been at the very birth of *The Yellow Book*. 'It happened', he says, 'that I was lunching at the National Club in Whitehall Gardens in the first week in January, 1894, when Henry Harland and John Lane had come to tell Gosse all about their new project; and as I made it the theme of my London letter to *The Critic* next day, and that letter still survives in print, I have at hand the earliest documentary evidence of what *The Yellow Book* was intended to be—a very different affair indeed from what it is commonly reported to have been among those who were born after it was dead and have not perhaps taken the trouble to look into the features of its death mask. For the popular report of *The Yellow Book* represents it as the organ of a sere and sallow decadence; while that afternoon Harland and Lane, so far at least as Lane could get in a word edgeways, were proclaiming the advent of a magazine which, in their own words, was to be "representative of the most cultured work which was then being done in England, prose and poetry, criticism, fiction and art, the oldest school and the newest side by side, with no hall-mark except that of excellence and no prejudice against anything but dullness and incapacity".... There was no sort of hint that *The Yellow Book* was to be the oriflamme of decadence; indeed, if any such suggestion had been made to its publisher, he would have become inarticulate on the spot.'

Since the events above related took place in January, it follows that the conversation at the Hogarth could but have been the spark that ignited a fuse already prepared.

No one could cavil at Mr. Waugh's account of *The*

## A PORTENT IN VIGO STREET

*Yellow Book* save that he speaks of it as dead. Dead! Death-mask, indeed! Far from it. Ever since it became known that I was engaged on this history of John Lane and his publishing house, I have received endless letters, many of them from the United States, asking me this or that question about *The Yellow Book*. A little while ago a lady wrote me a charming letter from that country. It enclosed a formidable *questionnaire* to which she politely requested me to supply the answers, for, she said, she was preparing a monograph on *The Yellow Book* which she intended to present as a thesis for the *doctorate of letters at some American university!*

To all such questioners I feel inclined to make answer and say: 'If you would know the origin of *The Yellow Book*, then bring me back John Lane or Elkin Mathews or my old colleague Frederic Chapman, who knew everything, if he did not always divulge it. Frederic Chapman it was who gave me my first practical lesson in the art of window-dressing, that far-off morning when he and I filled the window of the little shop in Vigo Street—the original Bodley Head—with *Yellow Books*, and nothing but *Yellow Books*, creating such a mighty glow of yellow at the far end of Vigo Street that one might have been forgiven for imagining for a moment that some awful portent had happened, and that the sun had risen in the West. I dare say that the origin of *The Yellow Book*, as time goes on, will become as doubtful as Homer's birthplace and that legends concerning it will never cease to accumulate. But never call it dead!'

It was the deliberate and avowed intention of the founders of *The Yellow Book* to do something new and daring. The word *new* was destined to assume its Latin significance and to convey the implication of something revolutionary. Harland in his early thirties,

Announcement

# The Yellow Book

An Illustrated Quarterly

Volume I April, 1894



London: Elkin Mathews & John Lane



## OLYMPIAN THUNDERS

and Beardsley just out of his teens, were game for anything. Lane on the whole was a sobering influence. His courage was tempered with discretion. But he had a sense of humour and took a mischievous delight in displaying to the world the sheep and the panther equally patient of the Bodleian yoke. The aim of ruffling the sleek waters of bourgeois respectability and self-complacency was achieved with a thoroughness that startled even the perpetrators of the outrage. Two or three days after the publication of the first number they awoke with delight to find themselves infamous. Their offence was rank, it smelt to heaven; its mephitic vapours penetrated to the editorial offices of *The Times* and the *Westminster Gazette* and stirred their Olympian occupants to a delirium of fury. The former rattled some of its most formidable thunder. 'Its note', it declared, 'appears to be a combination of English rowdyism with French lubricity. . . . Sir Frederick Leighton, who contributes two graceful studies, finds himself cheek by jowl with such advanced and riotous representatives of the new art as Mr. Aubrey Beardsley and Mr. Walter Sickert.' The unhappy Sir Frederick came round to *The Bodley Head*, said that his friends had reprimanded him with the utmost severity and that he had promised never to get into such a scrape again. The *Westminster* was even more truculent than *The Times*. 'His offence', it said of Aubrey Beardsley, 'is the less to be condoned because he has undoubted skill as a line draftsman and has shown himself capable of refined and delicate work. But as regards certain of his inventions in this number, especially the thing called "The Sentimental Education", and that other thing to which the name of Mrs. Patrick Campbell has somehow become attached, we do not know that anything would meet the case except a short

## A NOTABLE STORY

Act of Parliament to make this kind of thing illegal'.... 'The only writer (goes on this champion of Liberalism) who is entirely worthy to be ranked with Mr. Beardsley is, we think, Mr. Max Beerbohm, who contributes a "Defence of Cosmetics", which the reviewer pronounces to be 'triumphantly silly', wondering 'how any editor came to print such pernicious nonsense'. Henry Harland, 'George Egerton', Hubert Crackan thorpe, all came under the lash.

If the Press was unanimous in its condemnation of *The Yellow Book*, this was not the only circumstance to which it owed its triumph. Much of the matter was good; some of it was excellent. It naturally favoured the younger writers and artists, and William Watson, Richard Le Gallienne, John Davidson, Lionel Johnson, Max Beerbohm, Kenneth Grahame and Henry Harland himself—all these, however divergent in aim and outlook, were calculated to lend charm and novelty and distinction to any periodical. Harland, in addition to being an able and energetic editor who, as John Lane used to say, 'had the faculty of getting the best out of his contributors', was a man of great social charm and, what is still rarer, of genuine kindness of heart. He was assisted in his editorial labours by Miss Ella d'Arcy, a lady of brilliant gifts who herself contributed several short stories to *The Yellow Book*, at least one of which, 'Irremediable', in Volume I, is, by the subtlety of its psychological insight and the grace and charm of its style, entitled to take high rank among the great short stories in the language.

Henry Harland was by birth an American who, before he came to England, had, under the pseudonym of Sidney Luska, obtained a considerable vogue in America as a realistic novelist. He wrote a series of

## HENRY HARLAND

books dealing with the Jewish life in the poorer districts of New York. Nothing could be more striking than the contrast between these earlier works and the delicate artistry of the love romances—*The Cardinal's Snuffbox*, *My Friend Prospero*, *My Lady Paramount*, *Grey Roses*, with which he won such a great success in England. Though, in 1894, he had only just entered on the thirties, his long hair, which was black and wild, had already begun to be streaked with grey. He wore a dark moustache which concealed his rather full lip and a small beard, trimmed to a point, hid a somewhat receding chin. His blue eyes and pallid skin lent some colour to the notion that he was of Russian descent—a notion he was never tired of fomenting, mysteriously hinting at lofty but irregular parentage. Sometimes he would speak darkly about Franz Joseph, and the interest, the paternal interest, taken in him by that exalted personage. He would relate with a wonderful air of verisimilitude how he had been a student in the Irish College in Rome, and how he might certainly have had a Cardinal's hat before he was thirty had he only pursued his studies there. He had said all this for so long that in the end he really came to believe it.

At this date Harland was not a Catholic, but, like many other tumultuous or wayward spirits of the 'nineties—Wilde, Dowson, Johnson, for example—he became one before he died.

As a matter of fact, Harland, though an American by birth, came of good old English seafaring stock, the Harlands of Sprague Hall, Suffolk. About the year 1740, a son of Admiral Harland went out to New Orleans, made a fortune as a silversmith and jeweller, and became the most prominent citizen in the city of his adoption. He was Henry Harland's great-great-

## A MOTLEY COMPANY

grandfather. Some time after his departure from England, Admiral Harland, the silversmith's father, was created a baronet, but the title went to a younger son and became extinct in 1840.

'Harland', says Ella d'Arcy, 'was the most brilliant, witty and amusing of talkers, the sweetest-tempered of companions. Never were there such evenings as those long-ago evenings in Cromwell Road! I see him,' she continues, 'I see him standing on the hearth-rug, or sitting on the floor, waving his eye-glasses on the end of their cord, or refixing them on his short-sighted eyes, while assuring some "dear beautiful lady!" or other how much he admired her writing, or her painting, her frock, or the colour of her hair. He would re-christen a golden red-headed woman "Helen of Troy"; he would tell another that her eyes reminded him of "the moon rising over the jungle"; and thus put each on delightfully cordial terms with herself . . . and with him.

'The large drawing room, lighted by lamps and candles only—in those days electricity had not yet become general—would begin to fill up about nine o'clock.

'Two or three would have dined there. Others dropped in to coffee and cigarettes. One might hear Kenneth Grahame, Max Beerbohm, Hubert Crackanthorpe, Evelyn Sharp, Netta Syrett, Ethel Colburn Mayne, the Marriott-Watsons, Victoria Cross, Charlotte Mew, George Moore, Richard Le Gallienne, Arthur Symons, occasionally Edmund Gosse, and Henry James.'

Aubrey Beardsley, the art editor, was a terrible responsibility for John Lane. In spite of his extreme youth he did not, and would not, take himself seriously. He obstinately persisted in introducing into his drawings details of the most disconcerting description. Lane had, so to speak, to put them under the microscope and look



HENRY HARLAND  
From a sketch by Aubrey Beardsley



## A HOUSE-PARTY AT WINDERMERE

at them sideways and upside down, and even so, 'in his innocence' (as I have heard him put it), he overlooked a few things which he would otherwise have caused to be omitted.

Beardsley was never happier than when 'pulling the legs' of his critics. Never, however, did he hoist them more completely with their own petard than when he published some of his own work in *The Yellow Book* under an assumed name. These efforts were universally approved and held up to Beardsley as examples which he would do well to follow. Another of Beardsley's playful habits was to introduce portraits of well-known people of the day into his drawings.

John Lane used to say that Harland and Beardsley were among the most brilliant talkers he had ever known. Though, when John Lane was away in America, Beardsley severed his connexion with *The Yellow Book* and joined Joseph Pennell and Arthur Symons in founding *The Savoy*, he still continued to work for *The Bodley Head*, and he and John Lane remained the closest of friends. Lane was particularly fond of relating how he and Beardsley once spent a Christmas together at St. Mary's Abbey, Windermere. It appears that some friends of Lane's, who had a house in the most delightful part of Windermere facing the Langdales, invited him to spend Christmas there in 1896, and to bring with him any three men he chose. He took Aubrey Beardsley, Max Beerbohm and William Watson. 'After myself', Lane used to say with a twinkle in his eye, 'Aubrey was the best behaved of the party. He attended the church services regularly and devoutly, and as long as he lived the rector never failed to make enquiries after that "devout youth".'

Invaluable as its colour was as a condition of *The*

### A CAUSE CÉLÈBRE

*Yellow Book's* success, it was also nearly the cause of its undoing. It was a Sunday morning when John Lane arrived for the first time in New York. Wilde had failed in his libel action against the Marquess of Queensberry and the first thing that greeted his eyes were the headlines of the Sunday papers announcing in huge letters, 'Arrest of Oscar Wilde, *Yellow Book* under his arm'. It was a rude shock. 'It killed *The Yellow Book*, and it nearly killed me,' John Lane used to say. If *The Yellow Book* was killed, it was an unconscionable time a-dying, for it went on for another two years. Moreover, the volume under Wilde's arm, when he drove in state to make his *début* at the Court, was not *The Yellow Book* but merely a yellow book, namely, Pierre Louys's *Aphrodite*. The populace, however, who rarely show any nice discrimination in such circumstances, indulged in quite a passable little riot in Vigo Street. They threw stones at John Lane's windows, and clamoured for the head of Bodley on a charger. But, worse than this, six of the most prominent of the Bodley Head authors sent a cable to John Lane stating that unless he suppressed Beardsley's work in Volume V of *The Yellow Book* and omitted Oscar Wilde's name from his catalogue, they would withdraw their books. It was a formidable ultimatum, and demanded immediate action. John Lane did a wise thing. He cabled under protest, and left the decision in the hands of competent members of his staff, with Mr. William Watson and Mr. Wilfrid Meynell as advisers. They took the same view as the signatories to the cable. The terms of the ultimatum were agreed to. In the circumstances, it was perhaps the only wise course, but it is worth noting in passing that so far from there being any sort of sympathy between Wilde and Beardsley, John Lane told me

## AN UNJUST VERDICT

that the latter made it a stipulation that nothing of Wilde's should appear in *The Yellow Book* or in *The Savoy*, whether under his own name, or anonymously, or pseudonymously.

After Beardsley's departure, John Lane brought out nine more volumes, discharging with great credit the double rôle of art editor and publisher. But Lane was right when he said that Beardsley was *The Yellow Book* and *The Yellow Book* was Beardsley. Its significance as a 'geste', as a 'fanfaronnaise', ceased when that fantastic genius went from it. It became merely an excellent magazine.

It is strange, when one comes to look back upon it now, that the sticklers for propriety should have deemed themselves so deeply outraged by the vagaries of *The Yellow Book*; strange, even, that the poet of the Domestic Virtues, the singer of 'The Angel in the House', should have taken offence at it. Nowadays, all this talk concerning the improprieties, the decadent tendencies of *The Yellow Book*, seems 'much cry and little wool'. After all, the decadence, if decadence there was, was mainly a pose, mainly superficial. In an article in the *Manchester Guardian* of the 19th January, 1924, an article called forth by the untimely death of Oswald Sickert, Evelyn Sharp (now Mrs. H. W. Nevinson), herself one of the brightest stars of the Yellow Book constellation, remarks on the injustice of the verdict passed upon it by some of the more stilted representatives of Victorian respectability. 'Perhaps', she writes, 'it is true that no one who belonged to that set can write quite impartially about it. At the risk of posing as an old fogey, one is constrained to wonder if anywhere in the young world to-day there is a literary and artistic circle so full of vitality and promise as the one, absurdly

## BARON CORVO

labelled decadent, that produced those thirteen volumes perfectly printed and turned out at *The Bodley Head* as few books, I think, are turned out in a post-war world.'

No one of us whose youth was contemporaneous with those eager days will think this statement exaggerated. On the whole, it was all very Henri Murger-ish, very Bohemian, or tried to be; but notwithstanding its pose, its artificialities, *The Yellow Book* was a great adventure, and those who embarked upon it, despite their occasional absurdities, wrought much that was excellent, and perhaps not a little that will prove immortal. Its faults, such as they were, were the faults of youth, and to youth much must be forgiven—its importunity, its irreverence, even its seriousness.

The list of habitués at Cromwell Road is not quite complete. In addition to those mentioned, there was that strange, erratic creature, half-impostor, half-genius, the *soi-disant* Baron Corvo, of whom a notable biography was recently given to the world by Mr. A. J. A. Symons. Corvo, I have heard it said, was not infrequently verminous, and after his departure it was found necessary to treat with abundant doses of insecticide the armchair on which he had reposed. Another—a popular poet and ballad-monger—had an unfortunate tendency to appropriate the silver spoons in order that he might convert them into the wherewithal to purchase laudanum.

I never, so far as I remember, saw the gifted but ill-fated Crackanthorpe, who was, I believe, beloved by everyone. Lane used to relate an amusing story concerning him. Once, he (Lane), Harland, Walter, now Richard, Sickert and Crackanthorpe were at Dieppe together. Sanger's Circus was also there and greatly handicapped by the fact that no one in the company

## LANE IN A QUANDARY

could speak French. Hearing this, Crackanthurpe approached Lord George Sanger and offered his services as interpreter. The offer was gratefully accepted and, at five o'clock next morning—his friends having got up to see him off—Crackanthurpe departed on the back of an enormous elephant, his mission being to act as an advance agent for the Circus and to arrange for its accommodation in the next town.

Some months before the Wilde tragedy I had severed my connexion with *The Bodley Head* and so I can only guess at the turmoil that was raised within it when the blow fell. Lane, as I have said, was in New York at the time, and was naturally plunged into a terrible ferment. Here is a letter he dashed off to Chapman. It is written from Brevoort House, New York, under date April 9, 1895.

'DEAR CHAPMAN,

'On my arrival here on Sunday morn: I at once sent for the papers and learnt the result of the Oscar trial of last Wednesday. I was amazed to see the name of \_\_\_\_\_, it caught my eye at once. Directly after a little breakfast I sent you a cable withdrawing the Wilde books. On the Monday morn: I got your cable with the message from Watson and Meynell, so I was glad that I acted before that command came. In the afternoon I recd: a cable from Watson which I cabled to you for advice about; the demand, to me, seemed extraordinary. I acted on your advice, but I have in every other respect acted in the dark. What caused the demand? Nothing has appeared here to justify the

## THE MODERN HOGARTH

action and it seems to me a great injustice to Beardsley. So think Kipling, Le Gallienne and Tree, but I conclude something disagreeable has happened unknown to me. I hope, however, that you are sending me the papers with full reports; here very little appears. I saw the Editor of the *N. Y. Times* this morn:—a friend of Norman's—, he told me that the English papers were giving 10 and 12 columns to the case excepting the virtuous *Westminster Gazette*, which prided itself on not reporting the case. Should they, however—which seems to me quite likely—go for Beardsley, do not forget to write (or *inspire* someone else), pointing out that the *Westminster* wrote to us for the loan of the block of "The Wagnerites" to reproduce it!!

'If Beardsley is attacked, I hope someone will suggest that he has been the modern Hogarth in pointing out and, as it were, lampooning the period and its customs and *chiefly in the Y.B.*'

After some references to other business matters the letter goes on:

'I do not intend to remain in America one day beyond the time I have done my business, as the Oscar case may make it desirable for me to return at once.'

The letter concludes with the following postscript:

'The London Theatres on Oscar are very amusing to me, retaining his plays and withdrawing his name! I might just as well have ripped out the title-pages and sold the books!'

The attack on Beardsley was, of course, as has already been shown, as absurd as it was unjust. As for the Theatres, it has been explained on behalf of George

## AN URGENT DENIAL

Alexander, who had put on *The Importance of Being Earnest* at the St. James's, that he suppressed Wilde's name in order that he might continue the run, the profits of which he intended to set aside to help Wilde, whose financial position was desperate.

Lane appears to have cabled again and again for enlightenment, and to have got no satisfaction. He was particularly anxious publicly to deny that he had introduced a certain person to Wilde. He also wanted to hear about Beardsley.

'DEAR CHAPMAN,

'I cannot understand your silence *re* my repeated cables as to whether the London papers printed my long cable—dispatched on Wednesday night—from N.Y., 10th instant, through press agency, denying having introduced . . . to Wilde, etc., besides you never answered my cable to yourself of that day.

'This morn: I recd: an urgent and kind letter from Professor Sylvanus Thompson . . . to whom I am now writing with the request that he will see his way clear to sending the enclosed letter to *The Times*, *Chronicle*, *P.M.G.*, *West. G.*, *St. Jas's Gazette*, etc., if my denial has not already been printed. I am asking him to call on you for the necessary copies of the correspondence for him to send to the press. I think perhaps you two had better write a letter to the press *in my name* on the enclosed denial and letter from . . ., and perhaps Professor Thompson will hand it round. On Wednesday I sent the cabled denial through the Editor of the *New York Times*; he got it through as *news*, and I have concluded that it has been printed, or you would have repeated your request for a denial.'

Three days later his suspense was at an end. In a

## LANE GOES FISHING

letter dated 21st April from the Puritan Club he writes to Chapman thus:

‘Your cable yesterday came as a great relief to me. I dreaded that my denial had not been printed. Why did you not put me out of suspense before?’

And he winds up:

‘Why don’t you send me a daily paper on the Oscar case, *my denial at any rate?*’

A few months later we find Lane’s equanimity quite restored:

‘I am having a delightful time here,’ he writes on the 22nd August, 1895, from Prideaux Place, Padstow (the home of the Prideaux-Brunes). ‘Oddly enough Lady Rosalind Northcote—a sister of Lord St. Cyres—joins the house-party tomorrow. Yesterday I was out fishing all day . . .’

A marked characteristic of the letter-writers of those days was that they all seemed in too much of a hurry to date their letters. If the following letter headed ‘Duke of Cornwall Hotel, Plymouth. Monday Morn’ is to be regarded as a sequel to the one last quoted, it might be surmised that Lane had been lucky in his fishing:

‘DEAR CHAPMAN,

‘I am feeling much better this morn: I am here till the night train for Exeter.

‘Should there be any letters forwarded from Penzance, Padstow, or here for me, *please don’t open them.*

In a highly characteristic postscript he adds:

## WOULD-BE SUCCESSORS

'It is more than likely that I shall be invited to the Mayor's reception here tomorrow night of the "Institute of Journalists", in which case I shall return for it, *as one can't know too many editors.*'

Gradually, then, the sensation subsided and the Wilde trial was numbered with the

'Old unhappy far-off things'

of long ago. But Lane never completely threw it off. For a long time he was morbidly suspicious and discerned a pervert behind every tree. According to him the number of the tainted ones was legion.

*The Yellow Book* was not without its successors, or would-be successors. There was, for example, a very 'advanced' periodical whose appearance synchronised with the outbreak of war and which bore the arresting and not inappropriate title of *BLAST*. Among the contributors to the first number of this new illustrated quarterly, which was edited by Wyndham Lewis, were Jacob Epstein, Ford Madox Hueffer, Ezra Pound and Rebecca West. 'The spirit and purpose of the Arts and Literature of to-day are expressed in *BLAST*. No periodical since the famous *Yellow Book* has so comprehended the artistic movement of its decade. The artistic spirit of the Eighteen-Nineties was *The Yellow Book*. The artistic spirit of to-day is *BLAST*.' Thus modestly ran the manifesto. But 'the artistic spirit, of to-day' was stifled almost at birth. Its demise was one of the minor compensations of the War. Ford Madox Hueffer, one of the contributors, wrote a review of it for the *Outlook*. '*Blast*', he said, 'is very amusing, very actual, very impressive now and then; it contains less dullness than any periodical now offered to

this sad world. Mr. Pound goes on uttering what a late Academician called “barbaric Yawps”, Mr. Lewis presents you with a story that is, to other stories, what a piece of abstract music by Bach is to a piece of programme music. I don’t just figure out what it means, but I get from it ferociously odd sensations—but then I do not understand what Bach meant by the Fourth Fugue and I don’t want to. I get sensations enough from it. . . . Mr. Pound’s vortex does not so much appeal to me—it is too moral’ and so on. And to think that such things should fall from the lips of one who, a mild youth with a precocious beard, sat next me in the sixth form at school! *Quantum mutatus ab illo!*

About three months later the following announcement appeared: ‘Mr. Wyndham Lewis, the Editor of *Blast* has joined the Army. He has been a bombardier in the Royal Garrison Artillery, and has now been selected for a commission.’

Another publication, described as a quarterly of the arts, was launched in March of 1916, under the editorship of Austin O. Spare and Francis Marsden. This, too, was doomed to an early death. The name of it was *Form*. *The Yellow Book* has had no successors, and I think it never will. It, if anything, was *sui generis*.

## Chapter IX

### JOHN LANE AND HIS POETS

OF ALL John Lane's achievements as a publisher, I think the one of which he was proudest, the one which gave him the deepest satisfaction, was that it was he who had stood sponsor, so to speak, for the most distinguished poets of the Nineties.

In a characteristic phrase, Richard Le Gallienne has described him as 'one who scans Parnassus' Hill with a searchlight of sympathetic discovery, one who is at once the father and brother of all modern poets, and who, it may be said, holds them all in the hollow of his hand.'

In those days, *The Bodley Head* was, in a degree that no other publishing house was able to rival, the home of the Muses; and, if the artist in John Lane was satisfied because he was the means of giving good poetry to the world, the publisher, the man of business in him had no cause of complaint, for the poetry 'paid'.

'To discover', said John Davidson, 'or create a buying public for minor and other poetry must always be a great feat; to have achieved it nowadays, and in the manner in which it has been done at *The Bodley Head*, is to have established a record.'

It would obviously be inexpedient for a publisher openly to express any opinion as to the rival merits of the poetic honey he distributes to the world, and Lane, whatever his private preferences may have been, never,

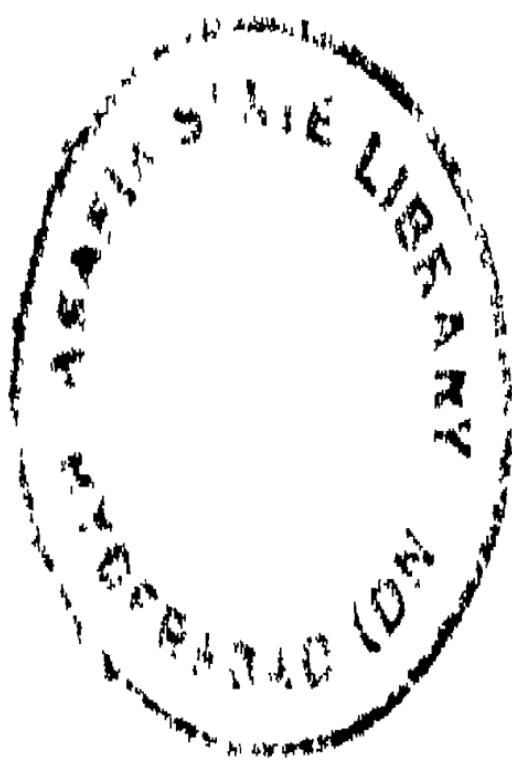
## A HALO OF ROMANCE

at least in my hearing, openly disclosed them. Le Gallienne was, so to speak, his first-born, and for him he always entertained an unwavering affection—an affection that was as warmly returned. ‘You will see I have not forgotten those old Bodley Head days,’ Le Gallienne once wrote to his old friend, ‘indeed, I am growing pathetically faithful as I grow older; and that wonderful old past grows more and more a religion with me. If I could draw, I would make you a Bodley Head with a halo (of romance, not of sanctity) around it!’ That letter was written from Le Gallienne’s home in America. To show how strong and how intimate were the ties that united the two men, I will quote the conclusion of a letter written from Mulberry Cottage, Brentford, in November, 1893. In it, Le Gallienne touches on various matters connected with the publication of his *Religion of a Literary Man*, and refers with satisfaction to a letter he had received from Coventry Patmore in which the elder poet says he looks to his confrère’s ‘earnestness, thoughtfulness and orthodox instincts’ to lead him one day into the bosom of the Church. Perhaps it was with a view to fostering the tender bud of piety he seemed to discern in the author of *English Poems* that he accompanied his encomiums with an invitation to Lymington. Then Le Gallienne goes on to say, ‘In a copy of his “Sentences”, Davidson has written one of the sweetest baby-poems for us that I have ever read. It touched us no little, as did the manly, cordial letter that accompanied it. As it is just six lines and we feel that we want to share it with you as soon as possible, here it is.’ And he quotes:

‘What little boat comes o’er the sea  
From islands of Eternity?’



RICHARD LE GALLIENNE, *cir.* 1894



OUT OF THE STRONG—

A little boat, a cradle boat,  
The signals at the mast denote,

And in the boat, a little life;  
Happy husband, happy wife!

lines which will now be found prefixed, by way of dedication, to Davidson's *Ballads and Songs*. 'Isn't it beautiful?' Le Gallienne continues. 'Still, as in Samson's day, out of the strong comes forth sweetness. The sweetness of a strong man is sweeter than wild honey. "Our" Mildred,' he concludes, 'sends you her best love . . . and is very anxious to know if you keep quite well. You must be careful of yourself this hellish weather. . . . Now, I fear, I must be running away. I hope you have been doing good business, without knocking yourself up. Keep the dream of "Universal Belles-Lettres" ever before you.—Dreams are the best pick-me-ups.—But I know there is little need to admonish you of that.

'With true love from us both,  
'Always yours,  
'RICKY.'

The cradle-boat was freighted with sorrow as well as with joy. The 'little life'—Hesper Joyce Le Gallienne—remained; but Mildred, 'our' Mildred passed out, over the sea, to the Islands of Eternity. And, in no long time, the author of the poem the 'strong man', conquered by Fate, was found mangled and lifeless, at the foot of a cliff beside the Cornish sea. I do not think Le Gallienne ever recovered from that tragedy. The house at Brentford, where I went to see them sometimes, was a pleasant, indeed a beautiful place, richly stored with books; but it became intolerable to him after Mildred's

death, and he went away. Frederic Chapman told me that the night after she died, he walked the lanes all night with Le Gallienne to tire him out, because he could not sleep. All the trials, all the tribulations of Le Gallienne's after life were implicit in that initial and irreparable loss. 'Home' had somehow lost its meaning for him; his spirit was consumed with restlessness. He became a wanderer. The wound was still fresh, when, years afterwards, he wrote this poem of 'Home':

'We're going home!' I heard two lovers say,  
 They kissed their friends and bade them bright good-byes;  
 I hid the deadly hunger in my eyes  
 And, lest I might have killed them, turned away.  
 Ah, love, we too once gambolled home as they,  
 Home from the town with such fair merchandise—  
 Wine and great grapes—the happy lover buys:  
 A little cosy feast to crown the day.  
 Yes! we had once a heaven we called a home,  
 Its empty rooms still haunt me like thine eyes  
 When the last sunset softly faded there;  
 Each day I tread each empty haunted room,  
 And now and then a little baby cries,  
 Or laughs a lovely laughter worse to bear.

The sort of regard in which Le Gallienne was—and is—held by his friends of those days, is typified by the article in which Arthur Waugh hailed in the *Daily Chronicle* the publication of Le Gallienne's *New Poems*. 'A new volume of poems by Mr. Richard Le Gallienne,' says Mr. Waugh, 'bearing the imprint of *The Bodley Head*, comes like a faint but haunting echo from the days when we were all younger. Is it really fifteen years since the Rhymers' Club was broken up? And who remembers their melodies now? Mr. Yeats has

## RHYMERS OF OUR YOUTH

fled to Ireland—a country from which he only issued, as it were, a changeling—but what should Mr. Le Gallienne do in America? Fifteen years ago he could scarcely have imagined a less congenial soil. How should he sing the Lord's song in a strange land? Mr. Ernest Rhys is busy editing learned classics for the million, and only too seldom strings his Celtic lyre to music. Mr. Arthur Symons is unhappily ill. The deaths of Lionel Johnson and Ernest Dowson are bitterly fresh in the memory. All the little company is scattered, and Mr. Le Gallienne's reappearance from under the old Bodley bust seems like some strange survival of forgotten associations. No reviewer of sensibility who remembers the age of the Rhymers and the youth of *The Yellow Book* will open this inviting volume without a touch of sentiment. Of course, they had their weaknesses and affectations, these Rhymers of our youth. They were none of them above riding their Pegasus through the public streets, and some even assumed a Viking air of conquest in flowing locks and wide gesticulations. But, after all, they did care. They did care very much for poetry, and there was something infectious about their enthusiasm, for they made other people care as well. "Publishers and sinners", as Mr. Nevinson likes to call them, were not afraid to look at verse in those days; literary editors were not sparing of space for their reviewing. In those days page three of the *Daily Chronicle* glittered every week with the discovery of genius. Does anyone care so much for poetry now? Perhaps, somewhere hidden away in provincial "literary societies", there are young hearts as ready to scorn delights and live laborious days in the hope of handing on the fire; but one does not hear of them. They do not take the public eye. For

## A CHILD OF THE MUSES

the time, the general interest in poetry seems to have died down with the Rhymers' Club, which, whatever its shortcomings, was undoubtedly in the true line of descent from all those little enthusiastic companies which, from age to age, have kept the embers aglow, and have lived for a little while in the beauty of romance.

And now out of the general silence Mr. Le Gallienne has returned, and the delightful thing about his return is the growing certainty, which increases as we wander through his pages, that however much we have changed, he, at least, is essentially the same. But not even America—metallic, commercial, hustling America—has been able to work withering miracles upon his idealism. He is the same poet of wayward sentiment and unpopular loyalty, true as ever to the golden girls and pearly dawns, the apple blossom and wind-blown love-locks as in the summers of fifteen or seventeen years ago; not a whit (thank the Muses!) more sophisticated. And, of course, there are the same foibles, long since nailed to the counter of ridicule by Mr. Owen Seaman. There is, for instance, the constant reminder that Mr. Le Gallienne was a journalist almost as soon as he was a poet, and has never quite freed himself from the fetters of his trade. Again there is the almost unintelligible failure of care which permits him to begin a poem: "War I abhor . . ." These faults are glaring, but they are also obvious; and the fact that we dwell upon them at all only shows that we ourselves have been growing old and hidebound, while Mr. Le Gallienne has continued exuberantly young. His is the better part, and it expresses itself in many better verses. . . . The hardened critic cannot get away, if he has any judgment at all, from the essential poetry which floods through this book, like tide through a creek, filling every corner

‘HORNS OF ELFLAND’

with light and sound. . . . Who can deny that this is of the very essence of poetry:

‘ “All the loving ever done  
Is not so sweet as the kiss o’ the sun  
Nor a woman ever born,  
As good to look on as the morn.  
Up, my soul, and let’s away  
Over the hills at break of day,  
Following, whate’er befalls,  
Yonder fairy horn that calls,  
Angel-blown in yonder star.  
Better far, O better far,  
Better far than any girl,  
Is the morning’s face of pearl  
And the wind about our ears—  
The true music of the spheres  
And the running of the river  
Good to listen to for ever.”

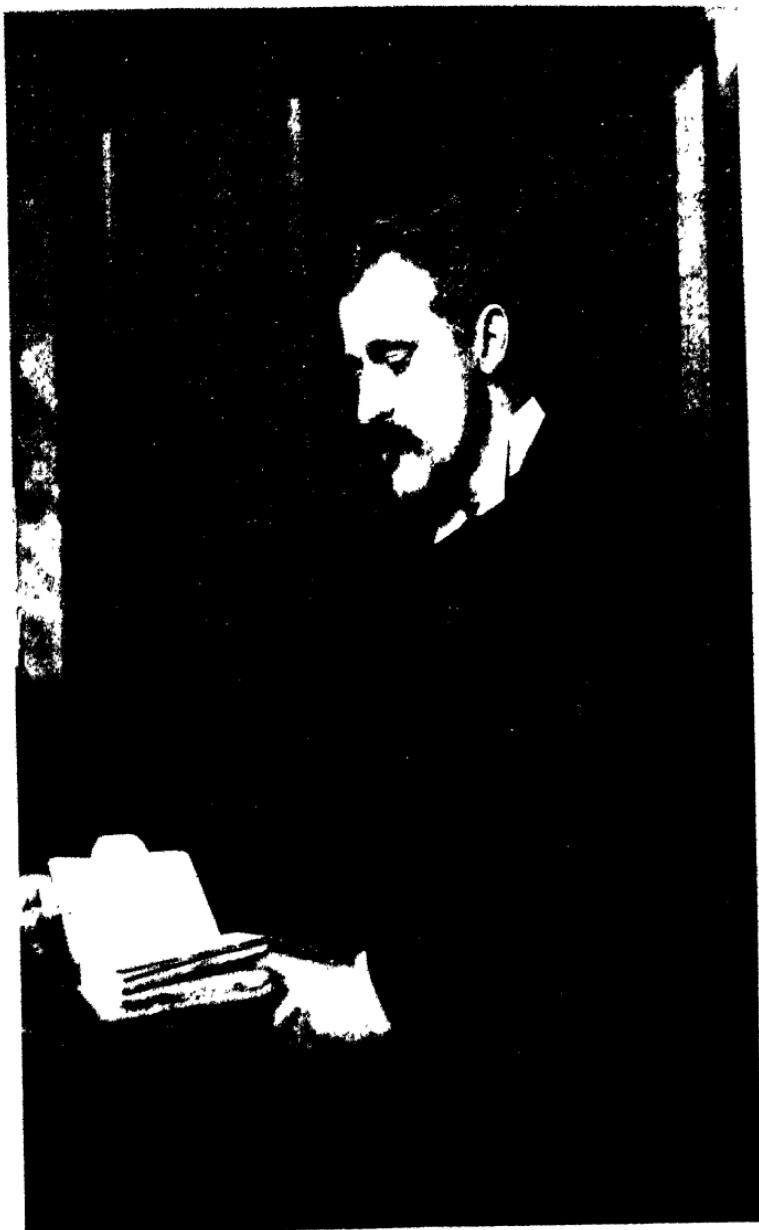
‘No New World has not spoiled this happy singer, who comes back to us, from the most sophisticated city in the world, as fresh an idealist of the afternoon as ever of the morning! Whatever change there is will be found, we fear, in us, but none of us is likely to be so translated as to refuse gratitude for an hour’s remembrance of our own spring mornings among the roses!’

It was twenty-six years ago that Arthur Waugh wrote thus of Le Gallienne. In a letter I received from him a few weeks ago from Mentone where he has now made his abode this is what he says: ‘I do believe that both of us, you and I, are still incorrigibly young . . . I simply cannot be sensible and grown up. I don’t know how it is done and never mean to try. Come then and let us all be young together. . . .’

## STATELY VERSE

Lane had an almost romantic affection for Le Galienne, and I think there is nothing he would not have done to befriend him. Nevertheless, I am inclined to think, that of all the singers associated with *The Bodley Head*, it was of Sir William Watson that John Lane was the proudest. He entertained in those days, and I do not think he ever seriously modified it, an immensely high opinion of that poet's work. This is perhaps a little surprising, because, of all his contemporaries, save Francis Thompson, the author of *Lachrymae Musarum* and of *Wordsworth's Grave* was, if I may use the expression, the least 'Ninetyish'. Always sedate, and sometimes stately in his verse, Sir William Watson is an unswerving upholder of the classical tradition. Perhaps it was the restrained dignity of his thought and manner, a certain hint of austerity that is not absent even from his most passionate pieces, which commended itself to the Puritan in Lane—for Lane's Puritanism was not all pose. He used to like to call himself a Huguenot, or a Quaker, and he professed a corresponding antagonism to the Old Religion. If I had to analyse the reason for this attitude, I should be inclined to say that he adopted it partly because the Quakers have the reputation of being the most cultured representatives of Nonconformity. His Huguenot ancestry was not all myth by any means. The name Jenn is another form of Jeune, and the Jeunes, I believe, are mainly Huguenots.

If reverence for classic form and scholarly tradition occasionally gives his verse a flavour of artificiality, something of the frigidity of a metrical exercise, the best of Watson's poetry is, in Matthew Arnold's phrase, truly 'of the centre', and so long as reverence for beauty of form endures, it will never sink into complete oblivion. That was Lane's opinion while they were still friends.



SIR WILLIAM WATSON



## THE FRONTIER

Later on there were differences, misunderstandings, that resulted in an estrangement which Lane's death rendered final. But the misunderstandings, whatever they were, never modified Lane's opinion of the poet.

I recall, as an instance of Lane's critical taste in poetry, a remark he made to me in the course of a drive we had together in North Devon. We had been talking about some of the earliest books published at *The Bodley Head*, and mention having been made by one of us of James Ashcroft Noble's *The Sonnet in England*, we drifted into a discussion of sonnets themselves, each of us giving rival examples of what we held to be perfect specimens of that most exacting of poetic forms. Suddenly Lane exclaimed in a tone of conviction, 'If only the "octet" had been equal in quality to the "sextet", there is a sonnet of Watson's that would have ranked among the finest in the language.' And he proceeded to quote that very beautiful poem, 'The Frontier', which first appeared in *The Yellow Book*:

'At the hush'd brink of twilight—when as though  
Some solemn journeying phantom paused to lay  
An ominous finger on the awestruck day,  
Earth holds her breath till that great presence go,—  
A moment comes of visionary glow,  
Pendulous 'twixt the gold hour and the grey,  
Lovelier than these, more eloquent than they  
Of memory, foresight, and life's ebb and flow,  
  
So have I known, in some fair woman's face,  
While viewless yet was Time's more gross imprint,  
The first, faint hesitant, elusive hint  
Of that invasion of the vandal years  
Seem deeper beauty than youth's cloudless grace,  
Wake subtler dreams and touch me nigh to tears.'

## SWEETNESS AND STRENGTH

Of John Davidson, too, Lane used to speak with enthusiasm; of Davidson whose 'note' was 'sweetness and strength'; of Davidson the manly contemner of shams and conventionalities, who seemed to share the view of that public man—was it Palmerston?—who declared that life would be tolerable were it not for its pleasures; of Davidson the unsociable who wrote to him on one occasion, saying, 'If you are really my friend, you will not send me that invitation to lunch you so kindly threatened me with.' Alas, Davidson was *conscious* of his strength, he paraded his ruggedness, he talked about it. Self-conscious strength is not as a rule the brand that lasts the longest, and the plight of the 'strong' man when his strength and his courage desert him is a desperate one. It was thus with Davidson. He was altogether too doughty. There have been many instances of pale-faced, delicate men, who never knew they were strong, but who had ten times the endurance—Lamb, for example.

But John Davidson had a very genuine poetic inspiration. There is no gainsaying that. He was out of the 'movement',—that is to say, he was not one of the Beardsley, Dowson, Wilde group, but he was, from the mere fact of his being in such strong reaction to it, very certainly a child of the age. In highly artificial states of society, it is natural to find at least some men giving utterance to a yearning for a simpler mode of life, and for the city-dweller to long for innocent unsophisticated joys of the country. There are men in whom the sight of luxury and display and all the complexities of an over-civilised existence are a weariness to the spirit, and who long to turn from the noise and bustle of it all to the simple joys of some imagined Golden Age. The same yearning, the same sensation of a spirit in bondage

O FORTUNATOS—

which caused Virgil to apostrophise the life of the husbandman as a life happy beyond all others, the same passionate longing for escape that made him cry in accents of undying beauty,

‘O, ubi campi,  
Spercheosque et virginibus bacchata Lacaenis,  
Taygeta! o, que me gelidis in vallibus Haemi,  
Sistat, et ingenti ramorum protegat umbra!’

—this same desire for a simpler mode of existence it was that prompted the exile, the prisoner, in London, the shy, awkward, little Scottish schoolmaster, to sing, as from his prison house, those amœbean strains whose title makes it clear that he was thinking of that other poet who, sick of the noise and turmoil and display of the capital, longed so wistfully for the woodland and the stream and the hidden life which they offer.

Take these lines from one of his *Fleet Street Eclogues*, in which the Press-men, imprisoned in the metropolis, exchange their recollections of the country.

Says one,

‘Humming the song of many a lark,  
Out of the sea, across the shires,  
The west wind blows about the park,  
And faintly stirs the Fleet Street wires.

Perhaps it sows the happy seed  
That blossoms in your memory;  
Certain of many a western mead  
And hill and stream it speaks to me.

With rosy showers of apple-bloom  
The orchard sward is mantled deep;  
Shaded in some sequestered combe,  
The red deer in the Quantocks sleep.’

## A NOBLE SONG

So he continues. Then another takes up the strain.  
He contributes his picture:

'I stand upon a lowly bridge  
Moss-grown beside the old Essex home;  
Over the distant purple ridge,  
The clouds arise in sultry foam . . .'

And so they go on.

Can it be a partiality for the poets of those days, that leads me to hold that 'A Runnable Stag' is one of the finest songs in the language?

'When the pods went pop on the broom, green broom,  
And apples began to be golden-skinned,  
We harboured a stag in the Priory comb,  
And we feathered his trail up-wind, up-wind,  
We feathered his trail up-wind—  
A stag of warrant, a stag, a stag,  
A runnable stag, a kingly crop,  
Brow, bay and tray and three on top,  
A stag, a runnable stag.'

And the conclusion:

'Three hundred gentlemen, able to ride,  
Three hundred horses as gallant and free,  
Beheld him escape on the evening tide,  
Far out till he sank in the Severn Sea,  
Till he sank in the depths of the sea—  
The stag, the buoyant stag, the stag  
That slept at last in a jewelled bed  
Under the sheltering ocean spread,  
The stag, the runnable stag.'

How much greater, it will be noticed, is the effect of tragic cruelty, increased by the fact that the epithets

## THE LIGHT THAT FAILED

applied to the huntsmen and their steeds, are noble and chivalrous: 'Three hundred gentlemen, able to ride, Three hundred horses as gallant and free'.

'His ballads,' writes Holbrook Jackson in a page of generous and discerning praise—'his ballads and eclogues, a few of his lyrics and passages in his poetic tragedies are already graven on the scroll of immortal verse. His "Testaments" belonged to another realm as they belong also to another period. They lack the old fine flavour of the poetry of his less purposeful days, and they hardly fulfil his own promise of a new poetry. They are in the main arrested poetry. The strife of the poet for a new expression, a new poetic value, is too evident, and you lay these later works down baffled and unconvinced, but reverent before the courage and honesty of a mind valiantly beating itself to destruction against the locked and barred door of an unknown and perhaps non-existent reality.'

Few read or remember him now, perhaps none, unless they happen to have flourished in the Nineties. Yet Davidson, poor shy, self-conscious, sensitive little schoolmaster, pathetically trying to play the strong man, Davidson, whose 'manliness', whose defiance was a symptom of a terrible inferiority complex, was a poet withal. But alas, his inspiration came and went fitfully, and at last it went to return no more. 'I am ill,' he once wrote sadly to John Lane, 'not from over-work, but because I cannot work at all.' The gleam had faded, the spring had been taken out of his year, and the blank, the sense of collapse and negation, was more than he could bear.

But the sense of neglect, disappointment, failure, wrung from him a cry which will echo down the ages. There is, of its kind, nothing finer and, at the same time,

## THE LAST JOURNEY

more tragically moving in the English language than the concluding verses of 'The Last Journey':

'My feet are heavy now, but on I go,  
    My head erect beneath the tragic years.  
The way is steep, but I would have it so;  
    And dusty, but I lay the dust with tears,  
Though none can see me weep: alone I climb  
    The rugged path that leads me out of time—  
    Out of time and out of all,  
    Singing yet in sun and rain,  
    "Heel and toe from dawn to dusk,  
    Round the world and home again".

Farewell the hope that mocked, farewell despair  
    That went before me still and made the pace,  
The earth is full of graves, and mine was there  
    Before my life began, my resting-place;  
And I shall find it out and with the dead  
    Lie down for ever, all my sayings said—  
    Deeds all done and songs all sung,  
    While others chant in sun and rain,  
    "Heel and toe from dawn to dusk,  
    Round the world and home again".

I only knew Davidson in his optimistic days, when he was still expecting that all London would soon be listening to him. He was going to sing a high song—

'paullo majora canamus'.

It was when he was writing his *Random Itinerary*, a record of tramps round London at a distance of some eight or ten miles from Charing Cross. I accompanied him on one of them. We lunched on bread and cheese



JOHN DAVIDSON  
From a sketch by Will Rothenstein, 1894



### 'ORCHARD SONGS'

and beer consumed on an alehouse bench. The fare was Spartan, but the talk—on his side at least—was Attic. Only one fragment remains with me, but it is a valuable one. 'Every man,' said Davidson, 'should make his own anthology, and (pointing to his forehead) keep it here.'

Norman Gale, another poet of the Nineties—a very minor one—is by this time, I suppose, completely forgotten. I confess I should never have thought of him had I not happened to pick up the other day a little book of verses bound in faded Irish linen of a colour that had once been apple-green, but which time and exposure and ill-usage had faded to a dingy yellow. That book was a talisman. I began to turn the pages and read a line or two here and there. Suddenly, as at a wave of an enchanter's wand, the mists of Time rolled back more than thirty years and once again I was in the little old original Bodley Head in Vigo Street, helping Mathews and Chapman to stack into piles these little books as they came in all fresh and green in their butter-paper wrappers from the van that was unloading them at the door.

Norman Gale, the author of *Orchard Songs*, was possessed of a pretty gift for turning melodious, flowing verse of no marked originality. He had already published, with David Nutt, a volume which had attracted some attention. Gale was an assistant master at Rugby, rather a big, florid man, who wrote discreetly fleshly poems about pretty milkmaids, and apple-blossom, and rustic junketings. Hardly anybody, I expect, reads his rhymes to-day. I dare say a few lines from *Orchard Songs* have found their way into some of the anthologies of the later Victorian poets. If I were compiling such an anthology, I should be tempted to include these

### DAINTY TRIFLES

lines 'To Hester' which recall, in their dainty tunefulness, the well-turned trivialities of Monckton Milnes:

'Hester Sinclair passed me by,  
    Busy at her glove—  
Hester Sinclair whom I call  
    Lavender and love!

Little waves of muslin film  
    Lapping at her feet,  
Hester trips, all snow in snow,  
    Country fair and sweet.

Hester Sinclair homes to me—  
    Mine this woodland dove!  
Hester trembles in my arms,  
    Lavender and love!'

And here is—for a Victorian and a schoolmaster—what was doubtless considered in those days a very daring description of 'Cicely Bathing'.

'The brook told the dove,  
    And the dove told me,  
That Cicely's bathing at the pool  
    With other virgins three.

The brook told the dove,  
    And the dove told me,  
That Cicely floating on the wave  
    Woke music in the tree.

The brook told the dove,  
    And the dove told me,  
That Cicely's drying in the sun,  
    A snowy sight to see.'

*CAPAX IMPERII*—

This third-hand mode of acquainting himself with Cicely's charms was no doubt becoming in a pedagogue; but not all the vocal denizens of the 'Nest of Singing Birds', as *The Bodley Head* came to be designated, would have been content with such vicarious impressions. A poem entitled 'Stella Maris' by Arthur Symons called forth at least one letter of grave rebuke from a member of the *Athenæum Club* who signed himself 'Not an Old Fogey'. This anonymous mentor complains, not only of the immorality of the lines, but of their setting. 'If anything', he indignantly exclaims, 'can induce purity of thought, it is a vast expanse of sea and sky with the stars coming out by twos and threes. Yet this is the moment that the writer chooses for gloating over and glorying in a "vulgar amour".' Such lines, he thinks, must be prejudicial to the sale of the book (*The Yellow Book*), 'for', he observes, with disarming naïveté, 'it prevents one mentioning the book to most unmarried women.'

Of another poet of the Nineties, and a conspicuous one, it might be said that he would have succeeded had not success come to him—too soon. *Capax imperii, nisi imperasset!* In the hey-day of his fame as a dramatist, Stephen Phillips was compared to Shakespeare and to Sophocles. At one time, as many as four of his plays were running simultaneously in London. His volume of *Poems*, published by *The Bodley Head*, was 'crowned'—to the tune of one hundred guineas—by the 'British Academy of Letters'—a 'stunt' run by the literary periodical, *The Academy*. A second crown—half-a-crown, viz.: fifty guineas—was awarded to W. E. Henley for an essay on *Burns*.

'Mr. Stephen Phillips's poetical rivals', says Lewis Hind, the editor of *The Academy*, 'were three in number—Mr. Francis Thompson, Mr. Watson, and Mr. Newbolt.

## A SPATE OF ADJECTIVES

We think, however, of Mr. Thompson's 1897 volume more as a collection of magnificent experiments than matured poems; while, on the other hand, Mr. William Watson's *Hope of the World* causes us to glance back to what he has done rather than to look forward to what he may do. More persistent rivalry was that of Mr. Newbolt, whose *Admirals All* holds in its thirty pages a kind of straightforward, vigorous, musical national verse of which Englishmen cannot have too much. But good though we consider these ballads, they have not the shining merit of Mr. Phillips's work, nor can we hold them quite worthy of the honour of 'coronation'. In a long review of Phillips's *Christ in Hades*, written by Lewis Hind and published in *The Academy* of January 1st, 1898, the reviewer remarked that 'the poem has qualities—a distinction and an individuality—which lifts it out of the category of minor verse, and has attracted widespread attention to this poem which has the Virgilian stateliness and Virgilian simplicity.' Mr. Hind was never stinting in his adjectives—they ran from him like a sort of verbal flux—and this is how he concludes: 'We trust that Mr. Phillips will take *Christ in Hades* as his standard, and will be content with nothing which does not at least equal that, alike in individuality of outlook, and in the perfect fusion of matter into form which is that indefinable, inevitable, undeniable thing, style.' Here is an example of the 'Virgilian stateliness, the Virgilian simplicity', of that perfect fusion of matter into form:

'Canst thou not make the primrose venture up  
Or bring the gentlest shower? O pity us;  
For I would ask of thee only to look  
Upon the wonderful sunlight, and to smell  
Earth in the rain. Is not the labourer,

## PREPOSTEROUS PRAISE

Returning heavy through the August sheaves  
Against the setting sun, who gladly smells  
His supper from the opening door, is he  
Not happier than these melancholy kings?  
How good it is to live, even at the worst!'

Of Phillips's next volume, it must surely have been the voice of Mr. Lewis Hind that said, 'How should language express more! It has an almost physical effect upon the reader, in the opening of the eyes and the dilation of the heart.' Of 'Herod', William Archer said it was 'the elder Dumas speaking with the voice of Milton', while of *Paolo and Francesca*, W. L. Courtney wrote that 'in Mr. Phillips we possess one who redeems our age from its comparative barrenness in the higher realms of poetry', and Mr. Owen Seaman that 'we are justified in speaking of Mr. Phillips's achievement as something without parallel in our age.' 'There was a time', said John Lane, in an interview after the poet's death, 'when ten thousand copies of a volume by Stephen Phillips would be subscribed for before publication.' 'I should imagine', he added, 'that such a demand was never before experienced by any poet. Probably at no period has poetry been so popular—not even in Tennyson's days.'

The time was to come—and that at no distant date—when the poet who spoke like the elder Dumas with the voice of Milton, the poet 'unparalleled in our age', came to walking wearily about the streets of London hawking his poems for shillings to anyone charitable enough to buy them. Once, it is recorded, he went into the office of the *Penny Illustrated Paper* with a poem. He was asked how much he wanted for it. 'Five shillings, I suppose,' was the reply. They gave him a sovereign, but suppressed the poem.

In June, 1913, Lane in a letter to a doctor at Croydon

#### 'BEAUTIFUL LIE THE DEAD'

asks him 'to call on Mr. Stephen Phillips, the poet, who is ill at 93, Tamworth Road, Croydon. I am sorry to say (he goes on) that his finances are not very bright just now. I do not want to incur unlimited expense, but I do not want his condition to be neglected for the sake of a little bill. Please let me know whether you think he ought to see an ear specialist and tell me what you think of his state. You understand that I make myself responsible for a moderate bill.'

'He (Phillips) could', says Mr. Osbert Burdett, 'bombast out a blank verse with anyone, but his best differs only in degree from his general tumidity. Probably *Paolo and Francesca* would best endure the test of revival; and though anyone who wrote a new *Marpessa* or *Christ in Hades* would reap a large reward, the kind requires the excitement of a new author to impose on the public. Its fate is to gain the immediate and passing success at which each individual line aims. This mode endeavours to silence our judgment by a magnificent sweep, and, in truth, it passes over our ears like a wave whose impulse is exhausted in the effort, leaving no impression, when once it has surged by.' That is excellently said. Mr. Burdett was thinking of such grandiose phrases as,

'The red-gold cataract of her streaming hair  
Is tumbled o'er the boundaries of the world'

lines which Beerbohm Tree would have mouthed out with such exuberant unction. But what of this beautiful thing, a late product, written when the hey-dey was over and the applause had died down?

'Beautiful lie the dead;  
Clear comes each feature;  
Satisfied not to be,  
Strangely contented.'



**STEPHEN PHILLIPS**



## DESPERATELY UNFORTUNATE

Like ships, the anchor dropped,  
Furled every sail is;  
Mirrored with all their masts  
In a deep water.'

Stephen Phillips was a poet spoiled by too early, too facile a success, ruined by the preposterous praise of foolish and windy critics.

There was, however, one major poet of the Nineties. Among all the warblers of divers song that composed that nest of singing birds there was one, and I am afraid one only, of whom it might be said with confidence that he 'was not born for death'. And that was Francis Thompson.

However remote from the spirit of the times the author of the *Hound of Heaven* may appear, however slenderly he was equipped to capture the taste of a period which has come to be looked upon as a little dissolute (people speak of 'The Naughty Nineties'), there was one condition of popularity which he abundantly fulfilled. He was, in all the material circumstances of his life, desperately unfortunate. Now, the English, for all their reputation for hard-headedness, are a romantic, or, at the least, a sentimental race. They are apt to moralise with comfortable complacency over the lot of persons less fortunate, less prosperous than themselves. Even when misfortune arises from the sins or follies of the sufferer, they do not always withhold their compassion, especially when the sinner, as with Verlaine, for example, happens to be a man of genius. Here then was a poor wretch who had been keeping body and soul together by selling newspapers, and opening cab doors; who got a job in a boot-shop and had to be discharged because he did such impossible



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## DIVINE POETRY

things as trying right boots on left feet, men's boots on women and all manner of incredible absurdities—and now it was discovered that he was a poet, a genius. It was said that he was so desperately poor that he had had to beg the paper on which to write down his verses. It was part of the story that a wad of sordid-looking manuscript was thrust into Mr. Meynell's letter-box, with no other indication of its origin than that it came from a Francis Thompson, who gave his address as Charing Cross Post Office;—this manuscript Mr. Meynell, hardly daring to touch, turned over gingerly with the tip of his thumb and forefinger as though it were a thing infected, turned over and began to read, and read on and was amazed, for what was written on that paper, in a curious rather sprawling irregular hand, was divine poetry. Like Mr. Lewis Hind, when he opened a book of Stephen Phillips, Mr. Meynell no doubt felt 'his eyes opening and his heart dilating'. And there was another thing about this poet—he was a slave to laudanum, which greatly assisted the formation of his legend. Some form of narcotic is almost a *conditio sine qua non* of a poet's success. True, Lord Tennyson had not been 'addicted' to laudanum—that would hardly have been becoming in one who was such a favourite with Queen Victoria—but he had made up for it as far as possible by wearing his hair very long, smoking very long pipes, and by going about in a flowing cloak and a queer shaped hat. Moreover, he had written a very good poem bringing in port-wine, and had expressed in another popular effusion something very like sympathy with the Lotus Eaters. True, there were other poets who did none of these things—Mr. Browning, for example, looked more like a well-to-do banker, and Mr. Matthew Arnold had not only worn mutton-chop

## SAVED FROM STARVATION

whiskers, but an eye-glass; but then, of course, besides being a poet, he was an inspector of schools. But this poet slept in doss-houses, when he could afford to do so, or on the Embankment, or under the Adelphi arches when he could not. It will be seen, then, that in so far as his outward setting, his *mise en scène*, was concerned, Mr. Thompson had a good deal in his favour. Dowson, with his fondness for coffee-stalls and cabmen's shelters and for the girl in the *Sceptre*, was in a strong position; and Lionel Johnson was reported to drink a great deal more than was good for him, and so too was Le Gallienne. There was another poet, and one of the best of the group who, in Mr. Burdett's Beardsley Period, doesn't come in for any mention at all, and that is Mr. Laurence Binyon. No doubt it was his utter respectability that accounted for this lack of recognition, that and a certain staidness in his manner and appearance, coupled with the fact that he holds a position of considerable responsibility at the British Museum. But Francis Thompson, who had striven unsuccessfully at Owens College, Manchester, to qualify as a doctor, and who, having quarrelled with his father, had at length left home and tramped it all the way to London, Francis Thompson who had been saved from starvation by a girl of the streets, Francis Thompson was emphatically not respectable and great things were expected of him. But the extraordinary thing was that, when they came to read the poems of this ne'er-do-well, they found that he was not in the least like Villon, or Verlaine, or Dowson, or even Omar Khayyám—there was nothing in them about prostitutes, no melodious regrets for old and reprehensible love-affairs, nothing about roses flung riotously, or pale, lost lilies, or bought, red mouths, or flinging away the winter garment of

## THE GRAND MANNER

repentance—on the contrary, they were poems of a rare and exalted spirituality, magnificent, but with the majestic hieratic magnificence of a great church during the progress of some solemn and majestic festival: they conveyed an intense and alarming sense of the nearness and overwhelming reality of things unseen.

Francis Thompson did not, in his day, share the popularity enjoyed by Phillips and Dowson. Five hundred copies—not ten thousand—were printed of the first edition, a slim quarto volume bound in dark brown boards with a cover-design and a frontispiece by Laurence Housman. The volume contained the *Hound of Heaven*, which, of itself, was enough to confer on the author a triumphant immortality. What the critics, who had squandered their adjectives with such lavish prodigality on Stephen Phillips, had to say about this poem, I do not recall. Mr. Lewis Hind—one of the most amiable of men but afflicted as a writer with an unstanchable and self-complacent garrulity, naturally preferred *Christ in Hades*.

Judging Francis Thompson by the touchstone recommended by Matthew Arnold, that is to say by a line or two of some acknowledged great one, Francis Thompson stands the test of the comparison. He rings true.

‘I dimly guess what Time in mists confounds;  
Yet ever and anon a trumpet sounds  
From the hid battlements of Eternity;  
Those shaken mists a space unsettle, then  
Round the half-glimpsèd turrets slowly wash again.’

Set those lines from the *Hound of Heaven* beside any passage from one of the great poets, beside this, for example, from Wordsworth—

## RELIGIOUS PREJUDICES

‘ . . . that blessed mood,  
In which the burthen of the mystery,  
In which the heavy and the weary weight  
Of all this unintelligible world,  
Is lightened:—that serene and blessed mood,  
In which the affections gently lead us on,—  
Until, the breath of this corporeal frame  
And even the motion of our human blood  
Almost suspended, we are laid asleep  
In body, and become a living soul.’

Whatever their dissimilarities, they have one thing at least in common, and that is what Arnold called ‘the grand manner’.

But I think, if the truth be told, that John Lane admired Francis Thompson’s poetry more than he loved it. Thompson was a Catholic, and Lane, who had become a member of the Society of Friends soon after he came to London, did not like Catholics. No doubt he modified his views as time went on. He was too much a man of the world to harbour bigotry or bitterness in his heart, or at any rate to betray it in his manner. Still, in the matter of Catholics, or rather of Catholicism, I do not fancy he ever got beyond the point of polite toleration.

Though I am far from sharing his reasons, I can sympathise to some extent with Lane in his view of Thompson’s poetry. If I too admire him more than I love him, it is not on account of his faith, for I share it, but because he belongs to a school whose elaborately ornamental language tends too often to degenerate into artificiality. The particular school of Elizabethan poetry which he seems to have taken as his model, or with which at any rate he has much in common, rarely exhibits

## THE SCHOLAR-POET

that noble simplicity which is the mark of the very highest genius. In such a passage as this, for example:

'I said to dawn: Be sudden; to eve: Be soon—  
With thy young skyey blossoms heap me over  
From this tremendous Lover!  
Float thy vague veil about me, lest He see!  
I tempted all His servitors, but to find  
My own betrayal in their constancy,  
In faith to Him their fickleness to me,  
Their traitorous trueness, and their loyal deceit.'

I find a hint of artificiality in these elaborate antitheses, these laboured oxymorons. The artist is too conscious of his art. The very greatest poet would have disdained

'Their traitorous trueness, and their loyal deceit'  
as he would have disdained this, of Tennyson:

'His honour rooted in dishonour stood,  
And faith unfaithful held him falsely true'.

A poet more in harmony with John Lane's temperament, a poet in whom respect for the classical tradition is happily united with a genuine poetic inspiration, was Laurence Binyon. Whatever remnants of Matthew Arnold's cloak had been left unappropriated by Sir William Watson seem to have descended upon the scholarly shoulders of Mr. Binyon. His first volume—a slender sheaf of *Lyric Poems*—was published in 1894 under the joint imprint of Elkin Mathews and John Lane. It was becomingly apparellled in Quaker grey, the usual vesture of Mr. Binyon's Muse.

A propos of Binyon's rather grave and solemn manner, there is extant a story which I hope I may be forgiven for repeating. When Robert Ross heard that Binyon was about to be married, he affected great surprise. 'Getting

## SWINBURNEAN ECHOES

married?' he exclaimed, with pretended incredulity, 'but I did not know that he had sown his Quaker Oats!'

If Francis Thompson and William Watson and John Davidson were, each in his own way, far removed from the decadent, or *fin de siècle*, spirit of the Nineties, Ernest Dowson was imbued with it to the point of saturation. 'The disillusioned proem to the verses, the strain of ecclesiastical mysticism in its more immediate appeal to the senses, the Swinburnean measures, the graceful villanelles, the Latin titles and quotations, the feeling for the eighteenth century in the poetic fantasy of Pierrot, the regrets and disappointed love, the whispers of riot, and the literary point of honour cultivated to its author's utmost: these are almost as complete a tissue of the poetical motives of the time as the art of Beardsley was, on a larger plane, of their contributory influences.' That is said, and well and truly said, by Mr. Osbert Burdett. 'The poem to Cynara', Mr. Burdett concludes, 'will be as certain to attract the reader of future anthologies containing it, as does, for example, the "Vixi puellis nuper idoneus" of Sir Thomas Wyatt.'

Merely to enumerate all the poets—men and women—would be a long task—long, tedious and a little sad, for many of them are now forgotten. Yet some sang prettily enough in their day. There was Dollie Radford, for example, whom as a girl—Dollie Maitland was her maiden name—I used to meet at a friend's house in Devonshire. She married a schoolmaster called Ernest Radford, himself a poet and a member of 'The Rhymers' Club'. Mrs. Rosamund Marriott-Watson, who used to write under the name 'Graham R. Tomson', was a true poet and tuned a sweet, if slender, reed. There were others, such as John Gray (who afterwards became a Catholic priest), and Lord de Tabley (John Leicester

## A FORGOTTEN SONNETEER

Warren), whose books only linger in my memory because of the exquisite bindings, designed by Charles Ricketts, in which they were given to the world. Ricketts, I think, never did anything more delicately beautiful in its way than the cover design of John Gray's *Silver-pointis* with its long tresses of willow that seem to tremble in the wind, a shimmering harmony of green and gold. Here are some names—alas, to this generation they are not even names—which I take from an old catalogue: Grant Allen, Eugene Benson, F. W. Bourdillon, Michael Field, Emily H. Hickey, R. K. Leather, W. Wilsey Martin, Alice Meynell (whose beautiful 'Renouncement' will surely survive), Percy Pinkerton, Katharine Tynan. And that list is dated 1894! They, and many more since then, have gone 'the way to dusty death'. There is one of these now neglected poets whose very name seems to have completely vanished. None of the writers on the period so far as I can trace make even the barest mention of her. And yet she wrote some sonnets that seem to me to be worth rescuing from oblivion. They are contained in a little volume entitled *A Little Child's Wreath*: a Sonnet Sequence, by Elizabeth Rachel Chapman. They are dedicated 'To the Holy Memory of A Little Child and to All Who Have Mourned one'. Here is one of the sonnets:

'Dying a child, thou wilt not see the birth  
Of beauty from the blossom-foam of May  
Again at all, or June enchant the earth  
With scent of hedge-rose and of new-mown hay.

No more the pageant of October woods  
Wilt thou behold, nor feel the mystical  
Hushed charm of nature in her wintry moods  
Of weird white silence any more at all.

## STATELY SORROW

Unseen by thee to mingle with the skies  
The alp shall rear his everlasting snow;  
Unhallowed by the wonder in thine eyes  
Through the clear heaven the harvest moon shall go;  
  
Unblest by gaze of thine, perennial rills  
Breathe answering peace among the little hills.'

And here is another:

'Where loving Francis shed on Umbrian ways  
And fruitful slopes of sun-kissed Apennine  
The benediction of his cheerful praise,  
The oil and spikenard of his speech benign,  
  
I wandered, musing how so dark an age  
Had borne a heart so pitying and so sweet,  
To whom all bruised things made pilgrimage—  
All hunted things—to shelter at his feet.

And fancy, wistful-fond, began to paint  
A greeting yonder in the far-off land,  
And how the merciful Assisian saint  
Had taken mine, rejoicing, by the hand;

Not so much glad that he was safe and whole,  
As proud to welcome a companion soul.'

This, surely, is the grief, and these the accents, of no common spirit. There is a grave distinction about these lines that proclaim them the work of a woman of culture and imagination. Yet, so far as I am aware, she is, at all events as a poet, completely unknown to this generation. Nor do any of these sonnets find a place in any anthology with which I am acquainted.

The little book in which these poems were published—350 copies for England and 200 for America—is typical

of *The Bodley Head* in its earliest days. It is a small, slim quarto volume, bound in pale green buckram and beautifully printed by R. Folkard & Son, of Devonshire Street, Queen Square, whose very colophon is a delight to the eye. The title-page is lettered and decorated with a wreath of wild-flowers by an artist whose name does not appear in the advertisement, but whom I take to be Illingworth Kay. It is a pity that publishing, which has now degenerated into a blatant commercial affair—publishers being like rival showmen, each trying to out-shout and out-bid his competitors—could not have remained the thing it was in the early and middle Nineties. I wonder if a publisher who went back to the ways of Mathews and Lane, as they were in those days, would have any chance of surviving. I am told definitely that he would not. I am not so sure. I do not think taste and a sense of proportion, of *mesure*, are quite dead in the world. The awkward thing is that, from the nature of the case, such a publisher could not get into touch with the public he desired by means of advertisement, for they are of the few that do not pay very much attention to advertisement. He would have to go out and find them, even as John Lane did.

John Lane was indeed, as Le Gallienne said, a father and a brother to his poets. They were a band of engaging fellows, but they were not always easy to get on with. They were fiery spirits, quick to take offence at trifles, and, quicker still, at nothing. One never quite knew, with any of them, when a sudden squall would spring up, still less what had brought it on. Usually the clouds passed as quickly as they had come.

Not only were they easily moved to wrath, but they were terribly reckless in the matter of finance. They held, with Lamb's friend Bigod, that 'money kept longer

## THE RHYMERS' CLUB

than three days stinks'. The consequence was that they were always desperately hard up and not infrequently insolvent. One writes to say that 'The state of Denmark is unsound to this degree, that we only have £1 10s. in the world.' They were always wanting something in advance. 'A publisher,' writes Davidson, 'who insisted on regarding his poets as beggars if they required money before the accounts were settled, will go to Hell and be tortured by having to hear through all eternity the glorious company of minor poets chant their poems.'

When they had obtained from their 'father and brother' money for all that they had written, for a good deal that was still to be written, as well as for some that would never be written at all, they were sometimes compelled to lend their clothes—for a consideration—to another, and more exacting, relative. Indeed, more than one of them found the pawnshop a very present help in time of trouble. One, having parted with his dress trousers in this way, and having urgent need of them to go to some function or other, sent the ticket to Lane and implored him to go and redeem them and send them off to him with all possible dispatch.

There was an attempt, which met with only qualified success, to bring these poets together in a *cénacle* or club. The members of this association, which was formally christened 'The Rhymers' Club', used to meet (according to Mr. Arthur Symons) in an upper room of 'The Cheshire Cheese', 'where long clay pipes lay in slim heaps on the wooden tables between tankards of ale; and young poets, then very young, recited their own verses to one another with a desperate and ineffectual attempt to get into tune with the Latin Quarter'. I do not know whether all the members who contributed to

## A CREATIVE PUBLISHER

the two 'Books of the Rhymers' Club' (now among the rarities of literature) were in the habit of attending the meetings at the 'Cheshire Cheese'. If so, they must have been a pretty mixed company. How, for example, would the poet of *Cynara* have 'hit it' with Dr. Richard Garnett, the venerable Keeper of Printed Books at the British Museum? And did Richard Le Gallienne let himself go in the decorous presence of Dr. T. Gordon Hake? The Rhymers' Club lasted two or three years and then 'ceased upon the midnight with no pain'.

Certainly, John Lane, if not himself a poet, had a considerable natural taste for poetry, which he had not neglected to cultivate. 'We are', says Mr. Le Gallienne, 'so accustomed to regard authors and publishers as natural enemies that we forget that a publisher may occasionally be something like a creative artist. By his selective encouragement of new talents, he may be instrumental in setting new fashions in literature, and by the general character of his business be no little of a contributory creator of taste. Such a creative publisher was John Lane.'

'Do I not sell dreams and live on poetry?' John Lane once said to a reporter who had come to his hotel to review him on behalf of the *New York Evening Sun*. That was in 1913, when the poetic hey-day was beginning to decline. Yet the later lists of *The Bodley Head* reveal the names of some distinguished singers. There is 'A. E.', for example, and H. C. Beeching and Margaret L. Woods and Lascelles Abercrombie, and, more important even than these, the noble verses given to the world during the war by that true and great-hearted poet, Emile Cammaerts. But times have changed, we live in an iron age, and nowadays a poet, I am told, too often has to *pay* to have his verses published!

## Chapter X

### SOME OF THE PROSE WRITERS

IT is obvious that to deal exhaustively, or even summarily, with the works published by *The Bodley Head* over the period of nearly half a century that it has been in existence, would far transcend the limits of a single chapter; indeed, a whole volume would scarcely suffice for such a purpose. If, then, in the pages which follow, a few names are selected for special mention, it is by no means that they necessarily excel the rest in merit, but rather that they exhibit, in one form or another, that special kind of excellence which is most distinctively characteristic of *The Bodley Head*. When it comes to defining precisely in what that distinctive excellence consists the thing is not so easy. It is in fact as difficult as formulating a definition of the attribute of distinction itself. Nevertheless, one thing is certain, and that is that no publishing house was ever possessed of a more strikingly individual character than *The Bodley Head*.

One thing would have been fatal in those days to the preservation of this typical character, and that is the removal (more than once mooted) of its local habitation to some other region. I say *in those days*, and the qualification is all-important. Times have changed. Gone are Nash's Regent Street, and the Hogarth Club. The West End is not what it was; and now it might be just as fatal to remain there.

## THE CHARMED CIRCLE

Chance it was, or Providence, that in 1887 led Lane to that little room in Vigo Street whither he hastily summoned the shy and meditative Mathews, and whither, obedient to the summons, Mathews came with his stock of books from the seclusion of Cathedral Yard in Exeter? And then, seven years later, when this not very happily assorted molecule was split into its component atoms, Chance was it, or Providence that puffed John Lane no farther than just across the way, to Albany?

Now, learned and curious minds have been at great pains to discuss and to decide what this so-called movement of the Nineties really amounted to, and to discriminate, among the numerous writers who flourished at that period, those who were in, and those who were out of it. Was there, they ask in the first place, any definite movement at all, and, if there was, then who belonged to it and who did not? A vast amount of ingenuity has been expended in supplying answers to these two questions. I fear I shall incur the condemnation, perhaps, indeed, the scorn, of these ingenious critics, when I tell them that they need not have cudgelled their brains so much about it; that the answer is really a very simple one, and very obvious. The answer is that those writers and artists were both in and of the Nineties, who revolved within the orbit of which John Lane was the centre. When one of these writers, or artists, came into the charmed circle, he at once became 'a Ninety'; when he departed beyond its circumference, he ceased to be 'a Ninety'. Beardsley and John Lane were—we see it now—a natural and inevitable combination. All this is not only because Lane was Lane; it is no less because Lane dwelt in Vigo Street, King of a tiny, highly favoured little kingdom bounded on the east by Nash's Regent Street, and more especially

RICHARD WALTER GEORGE JOHN  
LE GALLIENNE SICKERT MOORE DAVIDSON

OSCAR WILDE  
W. B.  
YEATS



ARTHUR HENRY CHARLES WILL MAX AUBREY  
SYMONS HARLAND CONDER ROSENSTEIN BEERBOHM BEARDSLEY

SOME PERSONS OF THE NINETIES: FROM THE CARICATURE  
BY MAX BEERBOHM

From the original in the possession of Mr. Philip Guedella,  
by kind permission of the owner, the artist and Messrs.  
William Heinemann



## THE VIVIFYING RAY

the old Café Royal, and on the west by the Hogarth Club. Northwards, it extended perhaps as far as the Café Verrey and southwards scarcely farther than Piccadilly. A special light illumined that miniature realm, in comparison with which all the surrounding tracts were drab and crepuscular, so crepuscular that even Mr. William Heinemann, who yielded nothing in brains or enterprise or energy to John Lane, shone with less, or at least with a different, effulgence.

Even the least significant singers took on importance and shone with a lustre not their own, and 'quivered within an intenser ray' when they penetrated into the glow that radiated, like the petals of a sunflower, from *The Bodley Head*. When Norman Gale—to take a humble instance—published his *Country Muse*, he was just a little minor poet of very modest importance indeed, but when his *Orchard Songs*, in the apple-green binding, with cover and title-page designed by whoever it was, came out from *The Bodley Head*, he was still, indeed, a mote, but a visible one; you could see him, with scores of others, dancing in the sunlight. Dozens of examples could be cited. There was the worthy Lord de Tabley for instance. He, if he did not dance, at least showed signs of animation for a time, warmed by the vivifying Bodleian ray. Lane and his Vigo Street worked a miracle which Lane anywhere else, or anyone else in Lane's place, would never have achieved. It was, for once, a case of the time and the place and the lov'd one all together: the Nineties, Vigo Street and John Lane.

There was another thing from which Lane was providentially preserved, and that was the 'best-seller'. I have said that the prevailing note of *The Bodley Head* was the note of distinction; and distinction implies something out of the common urn, something for the small

and select body of connoisseurs. This might of course imply a very limited *clientèle* indeed, and no publisher could exist upon it. But in point of fact, the real connoisseur, the man of genuinely fine and educated taste, brings in his train a whole army of *soi-disant* or pseudo-connoisseurs, *les snobs*. By this providential means does the publisher of good work, of delicate work, of work which is 'caviare to the general', escape bankruptcy. It will thus be seen how necessary it was that Lane should evade the incubus of the best-seller. Here again the credit belongs less to him than to the Fates. For if a best-seller had come his way, 'zounds he would have taken it!' Wells and Bennett nibbled and departed. We mean no disrespect to them when we say it was well for Lane that they did. It would have been like planting an oak tree in a porcelain vase. W. J. Locke was a best-seller, but a best-seller with a difference. He had no mission except to charm. He had no lesson to inculcate, no moral to drive home.

Perhaps, if Omar had lived in those days of elegant book production, he would not have been so completely at a loss to know 'what the vintners buy that's half so precious as the stuff they sell'. The answer would certainly have included some of the books of *The Bodley Head*. If the vintners exchanged their wine for books, it would be interesting to speculate what sort of vintages they could most appropriately offer for a wain-load of Bodley books. They would certainly bring nothing rough or crude, nothing to rasp or excoriate the palate, but rather such wine as would be calculated to produce an atmosphere of Attic wit, of social charm; to impart a sensation of gentle warmth and satisfaction, without clouding the brain, or overloading the stomach. I

'WHAT THE VINTNERS BUY'

imagine that the waggon that would draw up at the Sign of *The Bodley Head* would be freighted with the choicest and most delicate products of Bordeaux and Touraine. And, for such wine, what would the vintner take in the way of books? That, as I have hinted, it were too long to tell in full. But he would certainly demand all the romances by the creator of the immortal Paragot. Nor would he leave behind him a single volume of the graceful Saki or of the incomparable Max. 'Vernon Lee' he would also insist upon, if only because she had written so beautifully about Touraine and the sunlit lands of the South. That gem of scholarly prose, Compton Leith's *Sirenica*, which, in its measured grace, recalls the stately periods of Sir Thomas Browne—what would he offer in exchange for that, what save a bottle of the choicest Château Lafite? The vintner would doubtless read French, but he would nevertheless require a full set of the works of Anatole France in English, so that he might see for himself, and prove to others, how a great genius may change his sky and yet preserve his soul. Models of typography and scholarly editing are the series of Bodley Head Quartos. These would he take, and the books of Kenneth Grahame. *The Yellow Book* would not be forgotten. If our hypothetical vintner had included in his stock such heavy soporific liquor as would be fitting to barter for the solid books that 'no gentleman's library should be without'—ponderous histories, encyclopædias, scientific treatises—such liquor he would have to take away with him again, for the ponderous, the pedantic, the dull, the didactic, however worthy their purpose, have no place in the catalogue of *The Bodley Head*. But it is time to dismount from my allegorical steed. Let me begin at the beginning. Let me, therefore, go back again to my

## A LIVERPOOL MÆCENAS

early days at the old original Bodley Head and see what ghosts I can conjure up from the shadows. No source remains to me but my memory. Lane, Mathews, Chapman, all have departed and there is no one to whom I can refer. After Le Gallienne's *Volumes in Folio* I am not sure what followed, but I think it was *The Sonnet in England* by James Ashcroft Noble, who was a patron and practitioner of Letters in Liverpool, a none too wealthy Mæcenas who helped and encouraged budding authors. What was inside that volume I do not now remember, though I am prepared to swear it was excellent, for the author was a conscientious writer and a frequent contributor to the *Athenæum*. If, however, I have forgotten its contents, the appearance of the book lives in my memory plainly enough. It was bound in a cinnamon-brown cloth, and had a gilt lyre on the cover. Ashcroft Noble, if I am not deceived, was in those days an elderly man of rather stately aspect with a patriarchal beard. His daughter, Helen, married Edward Thomas, the poet and essayist, whose brilliant career was cut short by the War. Helen Thomas herself has written two books of vivid reminiscence which have attracted wide attention. She has some interesting memories to record concerning some young Liverpudlians who were destined to achieve fame in the Nineties. William Watson, she says, had a lively consciousness of what he conceived to be his high mission as a bard. She describes his fine, handsome features, his delicate aquiline nose, and tells how he would stride up and down her father's study, reading alternately passages from Milton and *The Prince's Quest* as if to invite comparison between them.

But it was Le Gallienne who made the most striking impression upon her. His father, a brewer, had told

## A GENEROUS ACT

James Ashcroft Noble that his son Richard had got it into his head that he was a poet. He asked him to look at the young man's work and to tell him frankly if he could see any merit in it. So Narcissus was invited to the Nobles' house. An account of him, of his chiselled Grecian features, his raven hair, had already preceded him, and there was great excitement among the ladies of the household at the prospect of his visit. At length, peering discreetly out of window, they saw him approaching, bearing an enormous bunch of rhododendrons for Mrs. Noble. He never failed in these gallant attentions.

Later on, Ashcroft Noble became seriously ill. He fell a victim to a mysterious form of intermittent paralysis which, while it was upon him, rendered him completely helpless. It was thought desirable to consult the famous London specialist, Dr. Ferrier, the foremost authority of the day on nervous diseases. But the great man's fee for coming all the way from London was a formidable one, and Ashcroft Noble, who had lavished his substance so prodigally in order to lend a helping hand to young and impecunious authors, was now anything but well off. In this crisis, Edward Hutton and the Hon. Roden Noel set themselves, with laudable zeal, to raise a fund for his assistance.

When Ferrier came, and more or less took in the family circumstances, he did a generous thing. His fee was one hundred and fifty guineas, but when Mrs. Noble handed him a cheque for that amount, he refused to take it, nor would he accept any smaller sum. It is true that he gave his patient only six months to live, and that Ashcroft Noble survived for several years and begot another child before he died.

A propos of Le Gallienne, a former Liverpool colleague, writes to me as follows:

## A WOMAN IN WHITE

‘Reading lately your book *The Path Through the Wood*, I noted that you were a great admirer of Richard Le Gallienne’s works. Le Gallienne was an apprentice in the same office as myself, a Chartered Accountant’s in Liverpool, in the early ’80’s. He was a great reader then, and I well remember the chaff, and how we helped to fit him out when he was invited to lunch at the Adelphi Hotel with Dr. Wendell Holmes and the excited state he got into. Also we provided the necessary (which was repaid) to publish his first book of verse: *My Ladies’ Sonnets and other “Vain and Amatory” Verses, with some of Graver Mood*, which he dedicated to his great friend, James A. Welch, who was also an apprentice to a Chartered Accountant in Liverpool. I don’t think I have seen Le Gallienne since 1887, when he joined Wilson Barrett, though I saw James A. Welch (Jimmy) later on.’

Jimmy Welch was, of course, the famous comedian who married Le Gallienne’s sister.

I cannot remember exactly how long it was after I had ‘taken my seat’ at *The Bodley Head* that there occurred an event that impressed itself indelibly on my memory. A parcel had arrived at the office which, upon examination, was found to contain a collection of short stories. These were sent in due course to Richard Le Gallienne for examination. He reported on them in glowing terms and strongly urged their publication. Unfortunately the author had omitted to leave an address. There was therefore nothing for it but to await developments, if any. Weeks, or it may have been months, went by, when at last, one summer morning, the door opened and admitted, together with a flood of sunlight, a very attractive young woman, slim, dark-haired and dressed all in white. She spoke with vivacity and

## A MYSTERY SOLVED

charm. It was Chapman who had the good fortune to interview her. To me, behind the screen, she was invisible, but, in no long time, curiosity compelled me to descend from my perch and to make as if I had some book or other to look out on the shelves of the office proper. It was not every day that we entertained a Muse in Vigo Street!

She had come, she said, to know if we had anything to tell her about a collection of short stories which she had left with us some time ago. Chapman enquired the author's name. 'George Egerton,' was the reply. 'They are my stories. I wrote them under that name. My real name is Clairmonte—Mrs. Clairmonte.'

Thus was the mystery solved. In due course the stories were published under the name *Keynotes*, and had a startling success. They were, for those times at any rate, rather daring, but they exhibited another characteristic which daring books of female authorship too rarely reveal: their workmanship was excellent, they were exceedingly well written.

Lane conceived the idea of publishing the book in stiffish paper covers. The cover design and title-page were to be by Aubrey Beardsley. The paper selected was strong, roughish, and of a colour between pale pink and mauve. Beardsley's design, representing a tall dark woman in a big hat, a Pierrot and a little imp-like man clad in black velvet or satin playing a guitar, was reproduced in a darker tone of the same colour. On the back was a most elegant and chastely fanciful key.

*Keynotes*, dedicated

*To*

KNUT HAMSUN

*In memory of a day when the west wind  
and the rainbow met*

## THE IMMORTAL 'BOY'

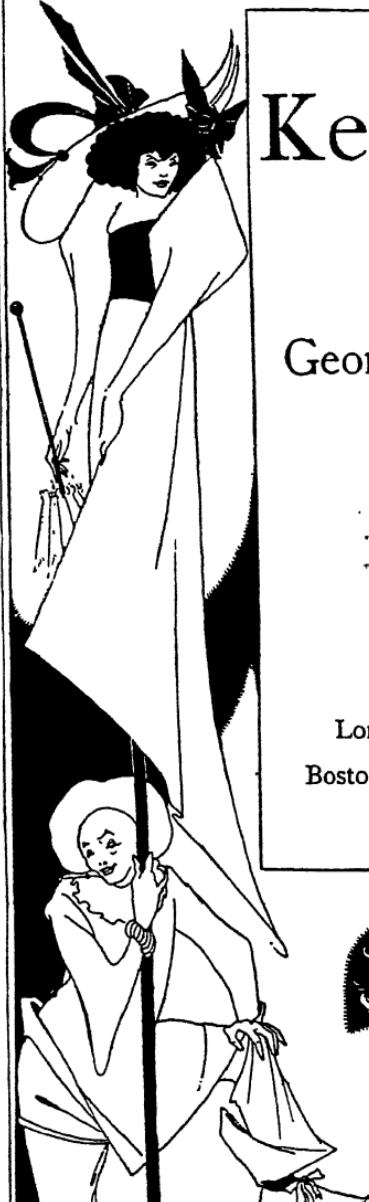
had an instantaneous and well-merited success. But the publishers had to give up their pretty paper binding. The libraries protested, and had to be appeased with cloth. It was a pity. The paper was a delightful experiment and, from every point of view save the utilitarian, an unqualified success.

This volume, which fully achieved the triumph Le Gallienne had predicted for it, went into several editions, was published in America, and gave its name to a series of books of which the following were among the more important:

*A Child of the Age*, by Francis Adams.  
*The Great God Pan*, by Arthur Machen.  
*Grey Roses*, by Henry Harland.  
*Monochromes*, by Ella D'Arcy.  
*The Mountain Lovers*, by Fiona Macleod. (William Sharp.)

Thirty years or more afterwards, I saw 'George Egerton' again. At her invitation I went to call upon her. This time, instead of a lady in white with black hair, I saw a lady in black with white hair, but, in spite of the passage of the years, the vivacity and charm which had lured me from my stool that far-off summer morning in Vigo Street had suffered no abatement.

Perhaps no book was more characteristic of *The Bodley Head* of those days than the *Autobiography of A Boy*, by G. S. Street, bound in a cloth, pale greyish-green in hue, that shone like watered silk. The Boy, 'Tubby', belonged to a type that the 'aesthetic craze' had engendered in rather alarming abundance. 'He had been expelled from two private and one public school; but his private tutor gave him an excellent character, proving that the rough and ready methods of schoolmasters'



# Keynotes

by

George Egerton



London: John Lane

Boston: Roberts Brothers

1895





## A RANDOM ITINERARY

appreciation were unsuited to the fineness of his nature. . . . He spoke with invariable kindness of the dons at Oxford (who sent him down in his third year), complaining only that they had not absorbed the true atmosphere of the place, which he loved. . . . His theory of life compelled him to be sometimes drunk. In his first year he was a severe ritualist, in his second an anarchist and atheist, in his third wearily indifferent to all things. . . . His humour of being carried in a sedan chair, swathed in blankets and reading a Latin poet, from his rooms to the Turkish bath, is still remembered in college.'

The author of this genial satire, now, I believe, His Majesty's Examiner of Plays, was in those days an exceedingly dandified young man who sported an eyeglass and who, in outward appearance (I hope I may say so without offence), bore no inconsiderable resemblance to the mental picture I had formed of his own Tubby. G. S. Street was for a time one of Lane's regular 'readers', and one of the most discerning.

Another book that appeared about this time was John Davidson's *A Random Itinerary*, the poet's prose record of his impressions and musings during a series of tramps round London at a radius of some ten miles or so from Charing Cross. I have not set eyes on the book since those days, but I perfectly remember its outward form. It was a foolscap-octavo, bound in a rough Irish linen the colour of old rose, with a title-page, cover design and frontispiece by Laurence Housman. Appended to the 'Itinerary', Davidson printed his 'Ballad of a Musician', and of this the frontispiece was an illustration.

Another prose work of distinction was one by an author of established reputation, John Addington Symonds, whose *In the Key of Blue*, with a cover design

## A PRECIOUS MEMENTO

by Charles Ricketts, was a collection of miscellaneous essays of which, perhaps, the most important was that on the work of Edward Cracroft Lefroy. Nor must I forget the plays of Oscar Wilde, which appeared, while Mathews and Lane were still in partnership, in quarto volumes beautifully printed on hand-made paper and bound in a delicate puce-coloured cloth.

Other books that belong to this period were two volumes by Frederick Wedmore entitled *Pastorals of France* and *Renunciations*, *The Rhythm of Life*, a volume of essays by Alice Meynell, *Pagan Papers* by Kenneth Grahame, some of the essays in which afterwards reappeared in *The Golden Age*. *Pagan Papers* had an exquisite title-page by Aubrey Beardsley and must now be one of the rarities of literature. I also recall two other really distinguished collections of essays, one, by W. P. James, entitled *Romantic Professions*, the other, *Books and Plays*, by Allan Monkhouse, of which all that I now remember is an excellent study of George Borrow. Then, of course, there were the *Prose Fancies* of Richard Le Gallienne, delicate, tender, sensitive musings, half-dream, half-reminiscence. I do not know whether this volume is still in print. If not, the day will surely come when it will again be given to the world. Such jewels as 'A Spring Morning', 'Good Bishop Valentine', 'A Borrowed Sovereign', and, most pathetically beautiful of them all, 'White Soul', must not be allowed to die. This book, which I cherish as a precious memento of an old friend and of days long past but not forgotten, was enriched by an admirable lithographed portrait of the author by R. Wilson Steer. *The Religion of a Literary Man*, with an epistolary dedication to A. E. Fletcher of the *Daily Chronicle*, was another book which appeared from Le Gallienne's pen about this time.

## A SENSITIVE TAILOR

Other prose books which belong to this period and of which mention should be made are: *George Meredith*, by Richard Le Gallienne, and *The Art of Thomas Hardy*, by Lionel Johnson, each with a bibliography by John Lane; *Robert Browning*, by J. T. Nettleship; *Excursions in Criticism: being some Prose Recreations of a Rhymer*, by William Watson.

All this while, Lane, daring, enterprising, energetic, was forging ahead as fast as Mathews, diffident, ineffective, unambitious, would allow him. The tandem was hopelessly ill-assorted. The leader might prance and curvet as much as he would, but the pace of the whole was the pace of the horse between the shafts, and that was slow and cautious.

At last the inevitable breach took place and a dissolution of the irksome association was decided upon. It was an uncomfortable period for everyone. I was, of course, Lane's friend, his liege man, but this did not prevent me from feeling a secret sympathy for the unhappy Elkin.

As the business, the publishing as distinct from the bookselling business, increased, it had become necessary to discover a place for storing and packing the books. For this purpose, the firm leased a room belonging to a tailor or cloth-merchant about two doors off, and I was put in charge of it. This tailor—whose name I think was Sadler—was a very sensitive man. He could not endure noise, and one of the conditions of our tenure of his room was that there should be no talking on the stairs leading up to it. In order to tease him, Chapman and I would sometimes open our door and pretend to hold a violent altercation on the landing, and then, tip-toeing back again, silently shut the door. Hardly had we reseated ourselves and composed our countenances,

## PACKERS GOOD AND BAD

when Sadler would fling himself up the stairs, and, bursting in upon us, indignantly demand what all that noise was about. Chapman with a look of admirably feigned surprise on his mild countenance, would innocently enquire, 'What noise?' 'He had heard nothing; had I? Certainly no one had been up to disturb us at our peaceful labours.' Then he would proceed with the utmost gravity to propound some preposterous theory to account for the clamour that had so distressed the unfortunate Sadler, who would depart with the terrible fear gnawing at his breast that he was perhaps afflicted with the premonitory symptoms of some grave mental disorder. Who, that did not know him, would have suspected the mild and pensive Chapman of indulging in such a pastime? Or who would have suspected him of expressing himself in language anything but parliamentary when confronted with a particularly difficult or vexatious situation. 'James,' he would say to me on such occasions in his rather mincing, old-maidish tones, 'James, the outlook is unquestionably *bloody!*'

This warehouse was more or less my domain. I felt a little bit cut off at first, but, before long, some of the shining lights, notably Beardsley, would occasionally come upstairs and talk. Lane, too, would bring people up so as to be able to confer with them at his ease, away from Mathews. This room was the scene of our orgies of packing. In times of pressure we should all turn to: Mathews, Lane, Chapman, Clarke, myself and the packer proper. Lane's parcels presented a melancholy spectacle. Anyone could see they would 'scarce hold the laying in'. Mathews, who had learnt everything he knew—and that was everything there was to know—about the book-trade, at Sotheran's, packed like

‘THE BEST OF FRIENDS—’

a professional. Lane soon began to commute his duties by supplying whisky and soda, a mutually advantageous arrangement.

When the disruption came, I was called upon, in my capacity as stock-clerk, to depone before the partners as to the comparative selling qualities of the various publications on their list. Now, at that time, George Egerton’s *Keynotes*, which Lane was taking with him across the street, was easily first. I did not conceal this fact, and Mathews looked with some surprise and approval on one who, though belonging to the opposite camp, did not hesitate to emphasise a priority which it was manifestly in Lane’s interests to attenuate, since, if Lane took *Keynotes* with him, he would have in fairness to concede a good many books to Mathews to make up for it. In the end, Lane went across the street with the sign and most of the clients and Mathews stayed on where he was. He remained there for a year or two. Then he packed up his books and his chagrins and took them to Cork Street, where he was in business when he died.

And that was the end of my apprenticeship. I took my leave of Mathews and Lane and *The Bodley Head* and went to work in the city, whence I gradually gravitated back into letters. ‘The nearer the church, the farther from God’ is a familiar saying that has more than a modicum of truth in it. I doubt whether I should ever have written anything if I had stayed on at Lane’s. I may be wrong, but I believe the atmosphere of a publisher’s office, even one so out of the common as *The Bodley Head* then was, is not an encouraging one for a man who would write. I can only conceive of one place less favourable, and that is a literary agent’s.

From this time forth and for many years to come I,

## THE NEW OFFICE

who had played a not unimportant part in its early development, was outside *The Bodley Head*. I had witnessed the budding of that tender plant; but now the time of its efflorescence had come and I was not at hand to behold it. It must have been about this time that he published H. G. Wells's *Select Conversations with an Uncle now Extinct* and Bennett's *The Man from the North*; about this time too he established relations never to be broken with a writer far more congenial to the Bodleian atmosphere, I mean W. J. Locke. At rare intervals I passed along Vigo Street during business hours, and, opening the door which (since no trade operations were allowed in Albany) had been fashioned in the wall of that beautiful apartment which once had been Lane's dining-room, I peered inside. But the faces I beheld there were the faces of strangers who knew not me. Of Chapman, indeed, I caught an occasional glimpse, but he too had changed. He had discarded his black frock-coat for a suit of buff-coloured whip-cord which he wore for the rest of his days. Roland Clarke, the accountant, no longer perched on a high stool behind a screen, had a room of his own and was far too busy wielding his complicated accounts for idle gossip. As for button-holing Lane, that was quite out of the question. Occasionally I was bidden to one of his famous teas, but somehow I felt an exile amid all that scintillating talent. If I had been more wide-awake to things, I should have asked Lane to send me copies of his new books as they appeared, and I am sure he would have done so, for he still regarded me with the old affection; but this I did not do, and so many of the things he published in the years that immediately followed the opening of his new premises are closed books to me.

# JOHN LANE



THE BODLEY HEAD VIGO ST W. *Telegrams "BODLEIAN" LONDON*

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FROM A DRAWING BY EDMUND H. NEW



## A HAPPY EXCHANGE

But being removed from the literary atmosphere, I began to think of writing. Oh, nothing of importance! Just an article or two now and then, some of which came back, while some did not. Lane saw them and encouraged me to continue, and Chapman also used to urge me on.

So time went on. I saw Lane rarely, though I heard and read of him often enough. Then came his marriage and his setting up house at Lancaster Gate Terrace, whither I went to pay a sort of state call. But that marriage, as the old romancers used to put it, 'deserves a chapter to itself'.

At last it was bruited abroad that Lane was about to begin his English Edition of the complete works of Anatole France. I had for a long time wished to try my hand at translating from the French, and Lane had given me his word that some day he would let me do so. I now wrote to him reminding him of his promise. Alas, all the Anatole France translations had been arranged for. However, there was a book by Vincent d'Indy—a life of César Franck. Would I care to do this, and would I come to tea next Sunday? I went, and there encountered Mrs. Rosa Newmarch, a noted authority on music and musicians. She was about to begin, for Lane, an English version of Lenotre's book on the Duchesse d'Angoulême, the daughter of Louis XVI, to which she was not especially drawn. What if we changed books? Lane consented, and so Mrs. Newmarch did the musical, and I the historical, book.

My work, wherever the quality of the translation was noticed at all, was praised. Lane was pleased and went about praising me very generously. That was the beginning of my resumption of relations with *The*

## AN ATTIC IN ALBANY

*Bodley Head*, which, before Lane died, were to become much closer still.

When Chapman was attacked by the progressive malady that at length carried him off, it became evident, after a time, that he would never be able to translate the Anatole France books he had set aside for himself. I forget now what the urgent circumstances were—they had to do, I think, with copyright—that led to my undertaking the English version of *My Friend's Book* which was needed in a great hurry. Chapman, as general editor of the series, came out to my house to go through the proofs with me. It was almost as though the old times, when we used to work together at the original *Bodley Head*, had returned again. Poor fellow, his malady was then far advanced—though he had still two or three years to live—and the hand of doom was visibly upon him. After Chapman's death, Lane invited me to take up his editorial duties. By this time I had given up my city work and, jointly with Henry Davray, was editing the *Anglo-French Review*. It was then that I wrote my first original book for Lane which I called *Anatole France: a study in critical biography*. In order that I might renew my personal relations with the subject of my work, arrangements were made for me to go to Tours and to visit Anatole France at La Béchellerie, his country home. For this expedition Lane agreed to give me a grant in aid. In addition to this work, I undertook all kinds of miscellaneous tasks for the firm, editing, proof-reading and so forth, for literary work was now my only source of livelihood. In order that I might be on the spot, I was quartered in an attic at the top of No. 41, in which Lane stored the overflow of his library and some of his old glass. Mounting the ninety-odd steps which led to this room, Lane would

## A NOTABLE BIOGRAPHY

sometimes come up of an afternoon and talk, mainly of Devon, of his people and mine, and of his early days in London.

The most industrious reader imaginable could hardly boast that he had read all the books published by *The Bodley Head*, and certainly no such claim is mine. There are, however, some which, at one time or another, have passed through my hands and which stand out pretty clearly in my memory. If I make mention of some of these, it must not be supposed that there are not many more by far, of equal or perhaps greater importance, that did not come my way. I shall merely speak of those of which I have some personal knowledge.

Among the outstanding landmarks in the later history of *The Bodley Head*, were many notable biographies. One of these was Mrs. A. M. W. Stirling's *Coke of Norfolk*, which achieved a wide popularity. It was followed by another book, *Annals of a Yorkshire House*, which was hardly less successful. There were, I believe, still others from the same gifted pen, but these latter I never saw. Of even greater importance, from a purely literary point of view, was a study of *Giovanni Boccaccio* by a writer destined to attain very high rank indeed. His name was Edward Hutton, who shared with the late Professor Edmund Gardner of London and Professor Okey of Cambridge the distinction of being among the greatest authorities on Italian language and literature. Another book that created something of a sensation in its day was a penetrating study of George Bernard Shaw by G. K. Chesterton. The mention of Chesterton reminds me that it was Lane

who published his *Orthodoxy*, and his *Napoleon of Notting Hill* as well as *Heretics*. Those, I think, were in the days before the royalty system came in, and I fancy Lane bought them outright. It was, I think, in regard to the first that I heard that Chesterton brought it in chapter by chapter as he wrote it, and it was written on any miscellaneous scraps of paper that came to his hand. He did not disdain, I have been told, even the paper that sugar is wrapped in for the purpose of recording his valuable thoughts. Anatole France was accustomed to use the insides of envelopes or the backs of bills for the same object. Later on, there was a collection of lives of great sailors under the general title of *The Golden Hind Series*, edited by Milton Waldman. The series was a notable one and achieved a well-merited popularity. Among the volumes composing it was a *Life of Dampier*, by Clennell Wilkinson. Though among the earliest—indeed, I think it was the first—of his published works, it is distinguished by those gifts for virile, vivid narrative, convincing portraiture and moving description which were soon to make his *Nelson* one of the great biographies of the language. André Maurois's *Ariel*, translated by Ella D'Arcy, and his *Disraeli*, translated by Hamish Miles, were conspicuous successes, and ran into several editions. To the books on art and artists, of which I have already spoken, should be added Gilchrist's *Life of William Blake*, republished by Lane in an edition of which he was very proud.

History and topography were subjects in which Lane was always profoundly interested, and by history I mean, not only history in its wider and more formal sense, but the annals of towns, or villages or even single families, diaries, memoirs, and so forth. I think it was always a matter of extreme regret to him that it had

## A FAMOUS ANTIQUARY

not fallen to his lot to publish the Farington diary. *Homes of the Past*, by W. H. Helm, a magnificent volume profusely illustrated from pen-and-ink drawings by A. C. Chappelow, was a book greatly to his taste. Mr. W. H. Helm is a distinguished East-Anglian antiquary who is also an ardent Francophile. Though he loves France, and speaks French easily, it cannot be denied that his accent leaves something to be desired. It is, indeed, unmistakably, nay, comically British, a fact which he himself readily acknowledges. Once, he told me, he was called on to make a speech to an audience composed entirely of French people. When he had sat down, one of his listeners, wishing to be polite, approached him and, with exquisite urbanity, said, 'Monsieur, pray, from what part of France do you come?'

In striking contrast to W. H. Helm's *Great Houses of the Past* was a book by one who is certainly the owner of a 'Great House' of the present; but it is a great house 'with a difference'. I mean *The Romance of Commerce*, by H. Gordon Selfridge. If my memory does not deceive me, Mr. Selfridge also furnished a valuable introduction to the *Fugger News Letters*, another publication of first-rate historical importance published by *The Bodley Head*.

I wonder how many people, reading the passage which follows, would succeed in guessing its authorship:

'A Japanese garden, such as the Imperial Gardens of Kyoto, is, above everything, a Place of Peace. No sounds, save those of the falling water and rare voices of birds, spoil that utter silence which envelops the Imperial Gardens as with a gossamer veil. Silence! You cannot guess the meaning of the word till you have roamed amid the flaming maples, leaned over the little

## THE LITERATURE OF ESCAPE

bridges which connect lake-island with hillside, and have watched for hours a couple of mediæval figures in a mediæval punt scouring the bottom of the lake. A beautiful wood-and-paper Japanese house crowns one of the little hills in this perfect garden, a house where my friends and I drank, out of frail cups, the finest Japanese tea. And here it was that I first heard of Teaism—the ceremony I saw in the garden at Tokyo. . . . Properly to drink and appreciate tea, you must drink it in a beautiful garden. In order to appreciate both, it is necessary that you should be able, at will, to attune your mind to beautiful things—and, say the Japanese, none are more beautiful than Gentleness (which means kindness), Good Manners (which, to my mind, is the same thing), and the Courage which makes the Perfect Knight.'

That passage is from the pen of a man who, I thought, never wrote anything, but only dictated. It is from *My Journey Round the World*, by the late Lord Northcliffe.

Under the heading of history—exceedingly exciting history—may be included the series of 'Escape' books for which *The Bodley Head* is famous. Of these, *The Road to En-Dor*, by E. H. Jones, and *The Escaping Club*, by A. J. Evans, are among the War-books that will never die. Another historian, this time of a period more remote, is Mr. Frederick Chamberlin, author of *The Private Character of Queen Elizabeth*, who inhabits, I believe, one of the Balearic Islands, but comes to London, from time to time, to prosecute his researches at the British Museum. I have heard that, finding the chairs in the Reading Room there not quite up to his standard of comfort, he was not backward in asking leave of the authorities to import a more luxurious

## A POPULAR NOVELIST

chair of his own. This privilege was allowed him. They drew the line, however, at the typewriter which he also wanted to introduce.

Lane was always greatly taken up with London history, and few things afforded him more satisfaction than to bring out a worthy book on that subject. Such were *The Great Fire of London*, *The Tower of London*, *Unknown London*, by Mr. Walter G. Bell; such, too, were *The Westminster City Fathers*, by W. H. Manchée, *The East India House*, by William Foster, *Bridewell Hospital*, by Edward Geoffrey O'Donoghue. All these, and many other volumes of a similar character, were copiously illustrated with contemporary prints and portraits.

Of the fiction published by John Lane, much of it, such as the work of W. J. Locke, reached a very high standard, and none, so far as I remember, failed to attain a certain level of distinction that raised it above the ordinary ephemeral reading matter of the day. Rivalling the novels of Locke in popularity were those which flowed—and her innumerable admirers hope will continue to flow—from the pen of Miss Muriel Hine, who, if I am not mistaken, already has twenty-one novels to her credit. Though Lane was by no means to be numbered with the great purveyors of fiction, he must, in the forty years or so of his life as a publisher, have put out a prodigious number of novels. I shall not attempt to enumerate even those which I have read, and they form a very small proportion of the whole; I will only say that nowhere did he show a finer discrimination, a truer sense of what makes for permanence in this class of literature, than when he gave to the world *The Street of the Eye* and *Mr. Godly Beside Himself*, by Mr. Gerald Bullett.

This cursory glance at some of the post-Nineties

## DISTINGUISHED TRADITIONS

publications of *The Bodley Head* scarcely so much as scratches the surface of the subject. At the best, it will afford a faint idea of the character, the *flavour* of its productions. The greater the scope of a business becomes, the more multifarious must be the nature of its output, and before Lane died, his business had grown to be a very considerable one indeed. But, though it was a very different concern from what it had been in those early days which I have endeavoured to recapture—I mean, in a word, the days of 'The Beardsley Period'—it still contrived to retain not a little of the traditional distinction with which it had started. *The Bodley Head* still continued to stand, not merely for excellence, but for a definite and recognisable kind of excellence. In short, it never lost its character for distinction, never sold its birthright for a mess of pottage, never took the cash and let the credit go. It has changed, of course, as everything that has the principle of life in it is bound to change. It has moved with the times, yet in so moving it has retained its hold on the past, with which it yet possesses a living link in the person of Frank Baker. No one knows more of the present activities and the past achievements of *The Bodley Head* than he. He is to the directorate, what a permanent under-secretary is to a Cabinet Minister.

‘RIBALD RHYMES’

No sooner did Lane rear his Bodley Head above the horizon than it became a target for a throng of parodists, lampooners and pasquillants. That sort of thing is one of the inevitable results of fame—or notoriety. I had almost said one of the penalties, but Lane was not the man to take offence at these shafts. Rather he regarded them as compliments, as indeed they were, and turned them to excellent account. Canon Ainger had ‘upp’d and said’:

‘Give us more of the godly heart,  
And less of the Bodley Head.’

And Owen Seaman, who had spoken of

‘The precious few, the heirs of utter godly head  
Who wear the yellow flower of blameless bodlihead,’  
was still more truculent in a satirical poem addressed to  
‘a Boy-Poet of the Decadence’:

‘The erotic affairs that you fiddle aloud  
Are as vulgar as coin of the mint;  
And you merely distinguish yourself from the crowd  
By the fact that you put ’em in print.

For your dull little vices we don’t care a fig,  
It is this that we deeply deplore,  
You were cast for a common or usual pig,  
But you play the invincible bore.’

## GOOD TACTICS

Lane did not invite the author of these lines to fight a duel; he invited him to dinner, to meet some of the victims of his satire. The result was that in due course *The Bodley Head* published *The Battle of the Bays*, in which these uncomplimentary lines were included and which proved not only one of the wittiest collections of the century but also one of Lane's most effective advertisements. *Punch* summed up the situation neatly in its issue of the 6th March, 1897, with the following rhyme, entitled 'The Uses of Parody':

'It was a man of modest wits  
Who dealt in vacant chaff;  
He did a little book of skits  
To make the people laugh.

A fleeting vogue such things will win,  
And he was asked to dine  
To meet a-many people in  
The literary line.

Pride battled in his breast with fear;  
He knew his low degree;  
He doubted if he dare appear  
In such society.

For here would muster men of fame,  
Impaled upon his pen;  
If they should recognise his name,  
What might not happen then?

Stars of the upper firmament,  
Lights of a lurid age,  
Their dignity might well resent  
A puppy's persiflage.

## THE POETS AND THE PARODIST

Nevertheless the following thought

Set silly fears aside:—

“I am too much a thing of nought

To be identified.”

He went. The air was thick with brains,

The language loud and tall;

Some wore their locks like lions' manes,

And some had none at all.

Who should his neighbours be? He scanned,

Trembling, the dinner list;

A decadent (consumptive) and

A blatant atheist!

Both victims! Wedged beneath the bards,

He spilled, with furtive shame,

A large *hors d'œuvre* across the card's

White face that bore his name.

Too late! They saw it! Through the wall

He sent a steady gaze;

When on his ears began to fall

Polite and lavish praise.

“But quite, quite excellent!” they said,

“A rare and generous jest!

Though other people's taste is dead,

*You* recognise the best.

“You have, we know, a heart that feels

Beneath your cynic smile;

None but a poet's touch reveals

A brother-poet's style.”

## THE BUSY LITTLE LANE

Much gratified, he drank their toast,  
And subsequently laid  
The naked facts before his host,  
Who understood the trade.

“The Publisher”, said he, “regards  
Your work as mainly sent  
To serve the heavy-hanging bards  
For cheap advertisement.

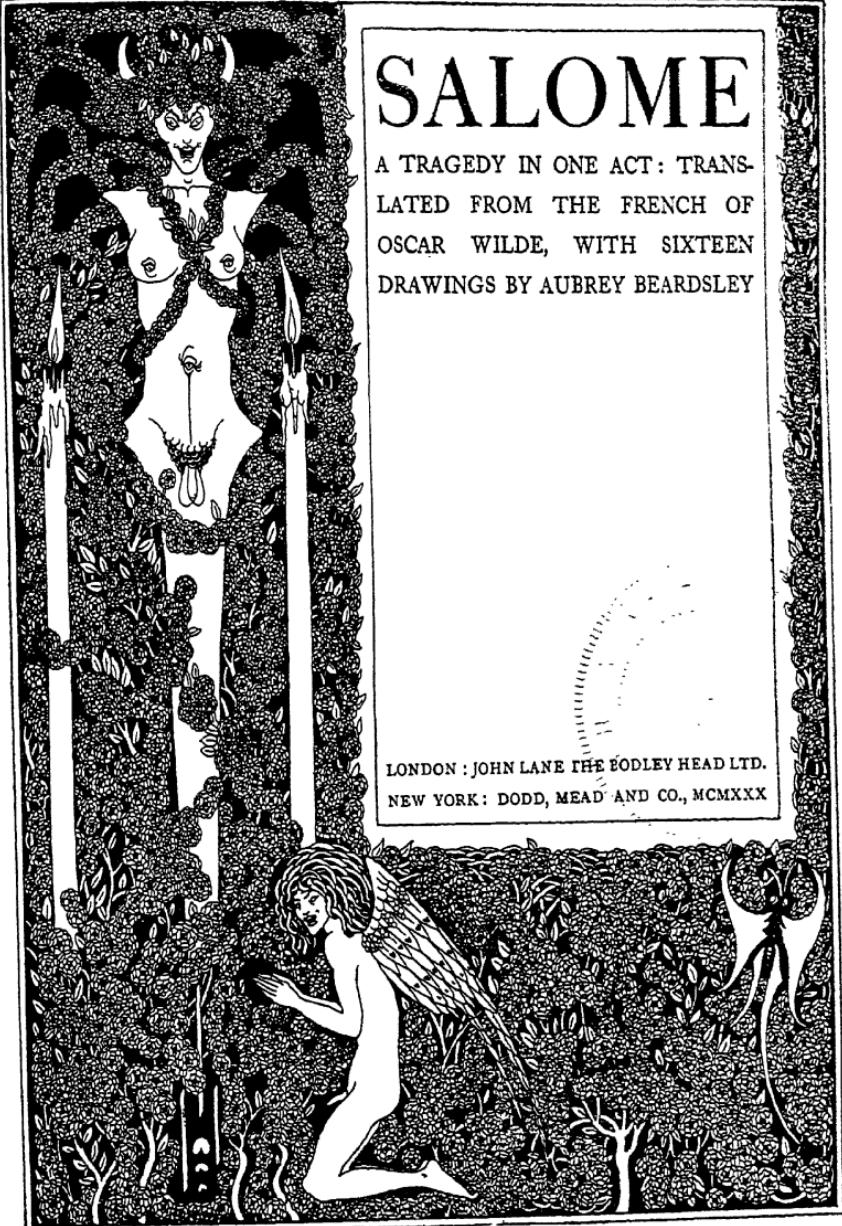
“*So far from feeling inward pain,*  
*He shews a sense of wit;*  
He hopes your humour may attain  
To make a thumping hit.

“Already tasting better times,  
He sells by twos and fours;  
*The public has to buy his rhymes*  
*To see the point of yours.”*’

As far back as December, 1894, the topical rhymesters had found a subject for their wit in John Lane and his ‘nest of singing birds’. Here, for example, are some ‘Lines Addressed to a member of the Hogarth Club’, by ‘Isaac Watsisname’:

‘How doth the busy little Lane  
Improve the Bodley Head;  
He gathers round him, day by day,  
The authors who are read.

How rapidly editions sell;  
How neat the pages too;  
He labours hard to bind them well  
In pink and buff and blue.



# SALOME

A TRAGEDY IN ONE ACT: TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH OF OSCAR WILDE, WITH SIXTEEN DRAWINGS BY AUBREY BEARDSLEY

LONDON: JOHN LANE THE BODLEY HEAD LTD.  
NEW YORK: DODD, MEAD AND CO., MCMXXX



## A LABOURED LAMPOON

With works by poets let us fill  
Our shelves, and none deny;  
Trust Lane to find some new ones still  
For idle cash to buy.

On books by poets I will spend  
My money all too fast.  
Narcissus did the same. A friend  
Paid up *his* bills at last.'

The last two lines are, of course, an allusion to Le Gallienne's *Book-bills of Narcissus*. About the same time, there appeared, in the *Westminster Gazette*, 'A Compleynte to Sir Thomas', which ran thus:

““There's a genius every morning?”” wept the  
people of the town,

“And the children look and wonder as they  
run him  
up and down.

“Is it Bodley  
Doth thus oddly?””

Said the people of the town.

“You must take them as I find them, for 've  
got to make them roll,<sup>1</sup>

And my shelves are packed with genius,”  
cried

the critic with a soul.

“Here's a poet—

Don't you know it?””

Asked the critic with a soul.

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<sup>1</sup> Le Gallienne wrote the book criticisms in the *Star* under the name “Logroller”.

## SAPPHO IN VIGO STREET

“Like a *lane* that hath no turning”, said the  
Philistine

instead,

“Is your string of wondrous poets marching  
just

where they are led!”

“If I’ve caught them,

“*Ye* have bought them,”

Smiled a mediæval Head.’

Not, perhaps a very successful effort on the part of the satirist, but useful publicity.

Lane’s edition of Wharton’s *Sappho* called forth some amusing lines in the *Sketch* over the initials J. M. B., which, of course, are those of J. M. Bulloch, its then assistant editor. Lane was unquestionably fond of women’s society—I forget who it was that once referred to him as ‘Petticoat Lane’—and women liked him. To this mutual attraction the publication of *Sappho* offered the gentle lampooner an opportunity to allude:

### THE BOWER OF SAPPHO

‘And then, you know, I publish for Sappho.’—*John Lane*.

‘In Lesbos, of immortal fame,

The Poet struck her wondrous lyre,

And set the Isles of Greece afame,

And all the hearts of men on fire.

But times, alas! have changed since then,

And Helicon is past our ken:

Parnassus is no poet’s seat,

For Sappho sings in Vigo Street.

Her Court was crowded; maidens came

To worship her from far and near,

For ne’er had Poet such a fame

And ne’er had woman such a peer.

THE JOHN LANE COMPANY

Old Sappho sang a syren strain,  
But now she twangs for Mr. Lane;  
Her courtiers came from Cos and Crete,  
But now they veer to Vigo Street.

Faint echoes of this woman's spell  
Were heard in many an English book—  
Just think of simple "L. E. L.",  
And innocent Eliza Cook.  
And now the Maiden Muse has fled  
For shelter to the Bodley Head,  
And there, with Mr. Lane's *élite*,  
Our Sappho sings in Vigo Street.

They sing, the modern Muses Nine,  
On hand-made paper, gorgeous print,  
With Aubrey Beardsley's weird design  
Of satyrs, leering-eyed and squint;  
Nor pipe they for a vulgar set—  
Their price, you know, is always net.  
The hearts of women throb and beat  
For Mr. Lane in Vigo Street.

What though the fire of Greece has gone?  
The seed of Sappho multiplies;  
And London has its Helicon,  
On which man turns his longing eyes.  
A heavenly throng, they chant their aims  
To Mr. Lane, the Squire of Dames;  
And sentiment is not effete,  
For Sappho sings in Vigo Street.'

In the course of 1896, John Lane established a branch, 'The John Lane Company', at 140 Fifth Avenue, New York, on which occasion *Woman*, a periodical then edited

‘GREAT VIGO’S GOD’

by Enoch Arnold Bennett, published the following effusion:

‘Are you dead, O Bodley Head?  
Or has Sir Thomas merely fled?  
Fled across the great Atlantic,  
With Bodley fervour, hot and frantic;  
Fled to give our Western cousins  
Modern poets by the dozens,  
Or ancient ones in new editions  
(Without your prudish, prim omissions!),  
Has he fled, with sign and Head,  
To swing them in New York instead?’

It can’t be true that there are two;  
We never could think that of *you*,  
You who stand supreme, unique,  
With pointed beard, of cut antique;  
We’d rather, frankly give you credit  
For making Bodley double-headed;  
A new and wondrous inspiration,  
To rouse another sleeping nation!  
Oh, had you not enough to do,  
But you must needs shock New York, too?’

Is classic Janus written Lanus?  
Great Vigo’s god, do not disdain us!  
We bring you, as a fit oblation,  
The *blasé* rising generation.  
We pray you, take our sacrifice,  
It’s subtle, if it isn’t nice!  
And don’t neglect our ancient race  
Because you have a newer face.  
For, will your beard, your country’s pride,  
Be just the same on New York side?’

## ACCEPTED ADDRESSES

Not, perhaps, very subtle in thought or workmanship, but again excellent publicity. Not only was Lane's dignity quite unruffled by these rhymes at his expense, but he gathered them together into a sheaf entitled *Accepted Addresses*, beautifully printed on hand-made paper, in a grey paper wrapper adorned with a marvellously fine reproduction of the head of Sir Thomas Bodley, and he gracefully dedicated the *opusculum* to A. E. K., who was, of course, none other than his intended wife—Annie Eichberg King—

*To*  
A. E. K.

*the wonder of whose humour—and eyes—proved such a revelation to him, the butt of this collection of ribald rhymes humbly offers them for her delectation.*

March 14, 1897.

But not all the 'ribald rhymes' were included in this collection. Long before, some paper—I think it was *Truth*—had printed a lampoon headed 'Minor Poets are Cheap To-day', the writer alleging that he had seen those words advertising a row of books in a shop-window near Ludgate Hill:

'Great is the grief of Elkin Matthew, [*sic*]  
As Vigo-streetwards the news is spread;  
Tears sufficient well-nigh to bathe you,  
Stream from the eyes of "The Bodley Head";  
Mr. Lane, with a courage failing,  
Counts his stock in a mournful way;  
Even the wind as it blows seems wailing,  
"Minor Poets are cheap to-day!"'

## SARTORIAL ECCENTRICITIES

‘Away on the slopes of Mount Parnassus  
(On the lower slope, you will understand)  
Bardlets, in velvet jacket, pass us,  
A limp, inert and dejected band;  
Never a one his pipe is tuning,  
Never a one is blithe and gay,  
For all are the crushing chorus crooning,  
“Minor poets are cheap to-day!”

“And yet”, they moan, “in our volumes recent  
How very impassioned we oft have been,  
Some of our lines have been scarcely decent,  
Not a few have been quite obscene.  
Rough-edged paper, eccentric binding,  
Plus lubricity, ought to pay;  
Yet we now to our grief are finding  
‘Minor poets are cheap to-day!’ ”

That is not precisely Hippocrene or Aganippe, but it served.

Le Gallienne, I think, was the only one of the poets who sported a velvet jacket in public. He wore, like the Scholar Gipsy, a hat of antique shape and a ‘soft, abstracted air’. His coat was of sage-green velvet, his shirt and collar, *à la* Byron, of some soft grey material, his tie, the hue of willow leaves in the wind, was loosely flowing. I do not remember that there was anything out of the ordinary about the attire of the other members of the nest of singing birds. Davidson was once reported to have been seen in a frock-coat surmounted by a straw hat and a puggaree, but this, I think, was in the country. It was Sturge Moore (not a distinctively Bodley man) whom, because he used to wear clothes of

## AN ICHABODLEIAN ODE

the roughest homespun, Max Beerbohm dubbed 'a sheep in sheep's clothing'.

When it was, precisely, that *The Bodley Head* began its series of 'Handbooks on Gardening' I do not remember. It started with the *Book of Asparagus*, and at once Mostyn Piggott was on the war-path with some of his ingenious rhymes. After enquiring whether the 'pens that told of scarlet sins' were now to descend 'to tell of scarlet runners', he continues what he calls his 'Ichabodleian Ode' as follows:

'Thy Head was once the habitat  
Of ev'ry human lark and linnet,  
The marrow and the marrowfat  
Dared never hope to pass within it.  
The briony and eglantine  
Made of thine ante-room a bower—  
Shall it in future be the shrine  
Of carrot and of cauliflower?

Must Hindhead give thee beans alone,  
And Haslemere supply but mangold?  
Must Chelsea send its sage home-grown  
And Bedford Park but spinach tangled?  
Oh can it be that o'er the beet  
And broccoli thy soul enthuses,  
Making once flowery Vigo Street  
The kitchen garden of the Muses?

Must Davidson the onion dress  
And Watson prune the futile fennel?  
Must Beeching tend the trivial cress?  
Must mustard master Mrs. Meynell?

## DECADENTS

And must Le Gallienne pour out  
His soul in rakish *obbligato*  
While hoeing round the brussels sprout  
Or round the rubicund tomato?

Must we abandon all our hopes  
Of reaping what a niggard fate owes  
And sadly see Parnassus' slopes.  
Producing parsnips and potatoes?  
For us the few, the favoured few,  
The future looks exceeding sable  
Since thou art posing as the new  
Autocrat of the Vege Table!

How sad our lot! The newsman tells,  
And tells in very mournful numbers,  
That hands which once framed villanelles  
Are now content to frame cucumbers!  
Oh Charon, scull us far away!  
We long for nothing now but thee, Styx!  
The radish routs the roundelay,  
And pea-sticks banish anapæstics!

The comic papers of the decade, indeed, were always very obligingly furnishing Lane with gratuitous advertisements. Here is another, from that once highly popular weekly, *Pick-me-up*:

### ‘DECADENTS

‘Tell me, where is Fancy bred?  
Certes, near the Bodley Head.  
In the Vigo Street domain,  
In the shadow of the Lane;  
Where Aucassin in a whirl  
Blindly seeks his Golden Girl;

#### A FALSE ATTRIBUTION

Where J. D.'s rebellious Nun  
By nimble Nicolette's outrun;  
Where the minor gods do feast  
On horrors from the Purple East;  
Beardsley views with vague affright  
Frankenstein in black and white,  
Beerbohm scans, devoid of joy,  
Leaves of a decayed Savoy—,  
These, the cream of Bodley Head,  
All do butter Fancy's bread.'

Here, too, Pegasus limps more than a little. The allusion to the Savoy was misplaced, for that periodical was published, not by John Lane, but by Leonard Smithers. The Golden Girl was a reference to Le Gallienne's famous fantasia, *The Quest of the Golden Girl*, which ran through several editions. J. D.'s Nun was John Davidson's 'Ballad of a Nun', which was first published in Volume III of *The Yellow Book*.

A lesser man than Lane would have been annoyed at these effusions. Not so Lane. He laughed at them; and where their workmanship was good enough, he used them.

## Chapter XII

### JOHN LANE AND AMERICA

IT WAS the proud, perhaps the unique, distinction of *The Bodley Head* that, of every book published by it up to 1896, an edition had been placed with one or other of the leading American publishers. In the October of that year, Lane, as I have already indicated, opened a branch house in Fifth Avenue, New York, and thus introduced to the American public a number of writers already famous, or destined to become so, among them Max Beerbohm, Arnold Bennett, H. G. Wells, Kenneth Grahame and W. J. Locke. The lists of the American house, which was quite distinct from the London establishment, show an interesting commingling of English and American names. Among the poets, for example, we find Laurence Hope, Rupert Brooke, Lascelles Abercrombie, Hazell Hall, Amory Hare, Eleanor Cox, Benjamin R. C. Low, Thomas Walsh, Danford Barney, Angela Morgan; while the prose writers include Stephen Leacock, Muriel Hine, John Ferguson, 'Compton Leith', Sherwood Anderson, Julien Street, Edith Wherry, Ralph C. Kendall, Jane Mander, Ernest Boyd, G. L. Hunter, W. A. Hawley, Mary Averill, Frank Crane, Coningsby Dawson, Theodore Dreiser—a collection of names which shows clearly that the works given to the world by the John Lane Company were by no means all imported.

## THE TARIFF WALL

But no publishing business was ever more of a personal concern than that of John Lane. Whether in England or America, he *was* the business. The maintenance of this personal control meant a constant journeying between London and New York. At first a pleasure, these perpetual *déplacements* at length began to tell on him, and he crossed the Atlantic less often. Unfortunately, as his visits declined in frequency, so also, for lack of his personal supervision, did the New York House decline in prosperity. Moreover, the American branch largely, though by no means wholly, depended on imported books, and business became very difficult, owing to constant changes in the tariff regulations. The American publisher who imported English books was called upon to pay 15 per cent. duty on two-thirds of the published price in England. For instance, if in London a novel was published at six shillings, the price to an English bookseller would have been four shillings for a single copy. The American, who took a vastly larger quantity than the English bookseller, naturally paid less, two shillings per copy being the usual figure. But the American Government, instead of charging 15 per cent. on two shillings, based the duty on four shillings per copy. This was bad enough, but it looked as if the then existing duties were going to be replaced by still higher ones, and this prospect, combined with his increasing desire to live a less strenuous life, prompted him, not without reluctance, to close down his American business, the stock and goodwill of which were transferred to Messrs. Dodd, Mead and Company of New York.

This was not all. With no one to control them, the staff had got, to put it mildly, not a little out of hand, which made it expedient to bring the enterprise to

## FAMILY PLATE

an end. It was a pity, because Lane was a good American and almost as much at home in New York as he was in London. Not only was America 'a connexion by marriage', so to speak, but he had kinsfolk of his own there, true American citizens, descendants of those members of the Hobbs family who had migrated from Marhamchurch in Cornwall a generation or two before. They lived at Fond du Lac, in Wisconsin, and in the year 1911 John Lane paid them a sort of state visit. The event caused no inconsiderable sensation in the district, and an account of it occupied two whole columns of the leading local paper. 'Mr. John Lane (thus runs the report), the well-known English publisher, of *The Bodley Head*, London and New York, has just made a visit to Fond du Lac. Mr. Lane, although he knows the United States well, was never before west of Chicago, which he first visited in 1895. Mr. Lane has recently discovered some near relations in Fond du Lac county, namely, Mr. George Hobbs, Mr. Louis Hobbs, Mr. Bill Hobbs, Miss Philippa Hobbs and Miss Lucy Jenn, all of Byron. The elder generation of the Hobbs family are first cousins of his mother, while Miss Jenn is his own first cousin. There has been no meeting between the English and Wisconsin relatives since 1844, ten years before Mr. Lane was born.'

On the Sunday, it is not surprising to learn, John Lane overhauled the family plate. His curiosity did not go unrewarded, for he discovered 'the christening spoons dated 1808 of two members of the Hobbs family, having also the initials of their godfather, Colonel Wrey I'ans, the father of Hawker's wife'. Lane must have been particularly gratified to learn that 'the township of Byron was so named by Mary Bridgeman Hobbs, who was the *belle* of the county in the early days of the settlement.

### 'HOBBSWORTHY'

Mary B. Hobbs was a great admirer of the poet, and she was asked by Dr. Adams, the first chairman of the town, to give it a name. The *belle* afterwards married her cousin, John Jenn, and their only child is the present Miss Lucy Jenn of Hamilton.' Not to be outdone by the Byron-loving *belle*, John Lane took advantage of the occasion to venture on a little christening on his own account. He suggested that the Hobbs's homestead, 'one of the most picturesque houses in the county', should in future be known as 'Hobbsworthy'. And that made him think of Devon. 'No doubt,' he remarked, 'the romantic scenery surrounding the Hobbs's home-  
stead was one of the inducements of the first settlers to build their log hut on the site which naturally recalled the combes and winding trout-streams of their ancient home in lovely Devon.' Nor, of course, did he miss the opportunity of quoting the words of a Bodley Head poet—William Watson:

'O sing me songs, O tell me tales,  
Of yonder valleys at my feet!  
She was a daughter of these dales,  
A daughter sweet.

Oft did she speak of homesteads there,  
And faces that her childhood knew. . . .'

Lane also met the Bishop of Fond du Lac, to whom he did not fail to relate that his father had had the unique experience of hearing Charles Kingsley preach in the morning at Clovelly, the Rev. John Russell (the famous hunting parson and friend of King Edward VII) in the afternoon at Bradworthy, and Hawker in the evening at Morwenstow.

A year or two later, I was privileged to meet Miss  
J.L.N.

## THE LAST OF THE JENNS

Lucy Jenn in Devonshire, whither she had come at John Lane's invitation to visit the cradle of the race. 'She', said John Lane to me, in a tone of preternatural solemnity, 'is the last of the Jenns!' John Lane was for taking her about to meet his various friends, and making afternoon calls on this person and on that, for he was a sociable man. Miss Jenn, who spoke American with an accent of formidable purity, protested. 'Say, Cousin John,' said she, 'cut out those tea parties. I guess I'm over here to look up the graves of my ancestors!'

Unlike Miss Mary B. Hobbs, Miss Lucy Jenn was not a *belle*, and had never christened a town; she was a prim little fat, elderly woman with a face like a ruddy apple, and bore a remarkable resemblance to 'Cousin John'. She was exceedingly wealthy, and exceedingly parsimonious. So insignificant were the tips she bestowed on the waiters and chambermaids of the hotels at which they stopped, that Lane had to go about after her, apologising and making up the deficiency. But Lane always spoke with some pride of his family connexions in America. He had made himself a name in the literary and artistic circles of New York. His business house had been in existence there for nearly thirty years. Though in the circumstances it was no doubt a relief to him to close it, he must have done so not without regret.

## THE MARRIAGE

THOUGH HE took great delight in feminine society—he has been described, more than once, as ‘a great man for the ladies’—Lane seemed fated to remain a bachelor. Time was getting on. Already a deviation from the perpendicular, a slight but unmistakable convexity was discernible below his waistline. His hair, though as yet unstreaked with grey, was perceptibly receding from his temples.

There was a girl in his native village, a pretty girl, the *belle* of the countryside, the daughter of a well-to-do farmer, of whom he used to speak in terms of admiration, and for a year or two it was thought that they would eventually ‘make a match of it’. But it came to nothing and the damsel, who did not lack suitors, finally bestowed her favours on a retired draper. And then, just as everyone had come to the conclusion that Lane would never marry, he fell in love.

One day, at a reception at Mrs. Louise Chandler Moulton’s, in Connaught Square, Lane was introduced to an American widow, a Mrs. A. E. King of Boston, Mass., who, with her mother, had come to London for a few weeks as Mrs. Moulton’s guest. It was, it seems, a case of love at first sight. Lane went again to Connaught Square, and yet again. At length, however, Mrs. King returned with her mother, who, by the way,

## A SERIOUS PASSION

was an extraordinarily picturesque old lady, to Boston, but not without leaving a barb behind her—in John Lane's heart. If the shaft had been invisible in its flight, its effects were manifest. It had struck home. This time it was no mere velleity, no mere transient attraction of the kind 'that had been and might be again', but a serious passion. Lane determined to follow the lady to America. What were four thousand miles of ocean to him! Besides, was there not pressing business to transact with Messrs. Copeland and Day, and with Messrs. Roberts Brothers of Boston? So for Boston he set out, preceded by a letter to herald his coming of no less than fifty pages, which, since he loathed letter-writing, shows clearly enough that he was indeed far gone! Nevertheless, in spite of his fervour, Lane returned to London without having brought matters to a head. But, although another year was to elapse before they met again, the marriage of John Lane and Annie Eichberg King was inscribed on the scroll of Fate. The next time John Lane crossed the Atlantic he came home not unaccompanied. In the same ship sailed his prospective bride and her mother.

The lady who thus became Mrs. John Lane was in many respects a remarkable woman. She was born at Geneva and was the daughter of a distinguished American musician, Julius Eichberg, who became Director of the Boston Conservatory of Music. Hearing her father say one day that he needed some words for a patriotic hymn he had composed, she herself resolved to supply them. After some hours spent in the throes of composition she produced her efforts. Alas, from the musician's point of view, the metre was unsuitable! The lines were excellent, but they were too long. Nothing daunted, the young poet retired with her work

## COVERED WITH GLORY

and, after an interval, again produced it, expressing the hope that it would now be satisfactory as she had cut off three feet from every line! Notwithstanding this drastic pruning, the poem and the stirring music with which it was alive were destined to become famous. The first time the national hymn 'To Thee, O Country' was performed in public it aroused tremendous enthusiasm. The youthful author,—she was barely sixteen—leapt suddenly into fame. She was asked how she would like to celebrate so great a triumph. She said she would like to look upon Mr. Longfellow. To Mr. Longfellow, therefore, she was taken. The old man in person opened the door. Patting the child affectionately on the head, he said, 'You have covered yourself with glory.'

A few years later Annie Eichberg married a Mr. King, a very estimable man, who, dying, left her a widow by no means unendowed. She continued to write, though not in verse, and was looking about for someone to give her work to the world when in the circumstances already recounted she fell in with John Lane and found in him both a publisher and a husband.

If any place rivalled Hartland in John Lane's affections, that place was Selborne, and at Selborne it was decided that the wedding should take place. It was a very quiet affair, only a few intimate friends being present. Mr. Francis Money-Coutts, afterwards Lord Latymer, gave the bride away. Congratulatory messages poured in upon them from every side, among them a post card from Bernard Shaw:

'So you have been following my example' he wrote. 'My receipt for a perfect honeymoon is two surgical operations, a fall downstairs and a broken arm. It has

SATIRES AND SIMPLES

answered perfectly in my case. But don't overdo it.  
Best wishes!

'Yours ever,

'G. BERNARD SHAW.'

The marriage was entirely happy. Mrs. Lane, in addition to her musical and literary accomplishments, possessed a quality which is not the invariable concomitant of such endowments: she was a most efficient housekeeper. She was, I believe, a generous-hearted woman. Certainly she had some devoted friends, but I always found her manner a little hard. She was accustomed to dress in light-grey silk, which, shining like steel, gave her a warlike appearance. It was not inappropriate. Though she lacked, perhaps, that indefinable quality which the Victorians called charm but which is known to the present enlightened age as sex appeal, Mrs. Lane was an excellent hostess, highly skilled in culinary arts and famous among her friends for her recipes. As for her published books, *According to Maria*, *The Champagne Standard*, *Talk of the Town*, I never did more than dip into them. They dealt, wittily and humorously it is said, with the conflict between English and American social life and satirised not unamiably some of our national foibles. Another book, *Kitwyk*, a little study of life in Holland, was in a different vein. Mrs. Lane was also responsible for an English version of *Peterkins, the Story of a Dog*, from the German of Ossip Schubin, as well as for translations of two books by Anatole France—*Honey-Bee* and *Balthasar*. The last time I saw her alive she read to me several passages from a manuscript in which she had drawn a picture of certain of her forefathers and of their old house in Düsseldorf, their native town. What she had written



MRS JOHN LANE



## A MEETING AT PUTFORD

was quite sincere, quite unpretentious, but it seemed to me to be filled with a tender dreaminess and depth of feeling not a little surprising in a woman of her apparently rather hard and pragmatical nature. It would be a strange irony if the one book which might have preserved her name from oblivion were destined to remain in manuscript.

I had many meetings with Mrs. Lane, but the one that lingers most pleasantly in my recollection is the first. One summer, I forget how many years ago, I happened to be staying at West Putford—the home of John Lane's people and my own—when I received a letter from Lane saying that he was driving out with some friends from Bideford to pay a visit to his birthplace. He asked me to repair to the church at a certain hour in the morning. I did so and there, in the church porch, I was presented to Mrs. John Lane. The company included William Watson the poet, then at the zenith of his fame, and Miss Margaret Roberts, who, under the pen-name of Margaret Lavington, has shown, more than once, that she can turn a witty and ingenious rhyme. Miss Roberts must have made a favourable impression on the bard, for he dedicated one of his poems to her.

His marriage was advantageous to Lane in many ways. It provided him with a settled and comfortable home and it notably increased his financial stability. *The Bodley Head* began to bring out some costly productions. As regards Lane himself, this settled prosperity made him a little august. He talked a good deal about 'my house' with no small emphasis on the possessive adjective. He would not say, for example, 'I left it at home', but always 'I left it at my house'. This sounds a small thing, but it was significant. Lane was almost

as proud of his marriage and of his domestic establishment as he was of *The Bodley Head*. And that is saying a great deal. He alluded to them both with a sort of reverent unction.

Mrs. Lane was, unofficially, one of the chief literary advisers to *The Bodley Head*, and Lane always placed great reliance on her judgment.

Lane had a vast number of talented and distinguished friends, his marriage provided him with the place and the means to gather them about him, and this pleased both him and his wife. Some of the most brilliant people in literary and artistic London came, of a Sunday afternoon, to hear themselves talk at No. 8 Lancaster Gate Terrace. Among the people I used to meet at these, to me, quite alarming reunions, was a certain Scottish advocate named Francis Steuart, who, in common with all the other bearers of that name, was one of the royal Steuarts but who, by no means in common with all those exalted people, was possessed of a most engaging gift of humour. He had not only an inexhaustible stock of anecdotes about all manner of persons high and low, but a most effective way of telling them. He was a born *raconteur*. I was always glad when I spied him out, a quaint little, black-clad tubby figure, at those formidable tea-parties. Among the welter of persons more or less known to fame whom I used to meet there, one stands out clearly defined in my mental vision: a well-favoured, neat-headed man of military aspect in a rather close-fitting suit of grey, and a high stiff collar, sitting bolt upright beside Mrs. Lane as she dispensed the tea. It was William Watson, the poet.

It is said that in after years, whenever occasion led him through Connaught Square, Lane always cere-

## A RETREAT TO BATH

moniously took off his hat to the house in which he had first met his bride-to-be.

But Lancaster Gate Terrace was not the only place where Mr. and Mrs. Lane received their friends. Lane used to spend a great deal of time at Brighton, where he had a widowed sister. Another favourite haunt of his in the old days was the Red Lion, Wendover, which he used as a base for exploring the Chilterns. And then for a long time he made Boars Hill near Oxford almost a second home, and in his rooms at the hotel there many men and women eminent in science, art and letters would forgather.

During the War—I forget exactly how long it had been in progress—a fragment of a shell did a good deal of damage to his library at Lancaster Gate Terrace. The shock was a considerable one, especially to Mrs. Lane. He therefore closed his London house for a time and he and Mrs. Lane took up their residence in Bath, which had always been one of his favourite haunts and where he had many friends.

SOME FAMOUS TRANSLATIONS

ONE MORNING there was an unprecedented sensation at *The Bodley Head*. Two plain-clothes officers from Scotland Yard made their appearance in that peaceful abode armed with some sort of document, writ, summons or whatever its proper legal designation may be, calling upon John Lane to cease publication of a certain obscene book, to wit a rendering of *The Song of Songs* by Hermann Sudermann. This book had been translated by an American named Seltzer and had been sent over in sheets. Seltzer, it appeared, had certainly done nothing to tone down the more daring passages in the book. Whether Lane had ever examined the translation in detail, I do not know. It had sold widely in America and Lane probably thought that what had been accepted with enthusiasm in the land of the Pilgrim Fathers, ought not to give any offence in London. But a complaint had been lodged at Scotland Yard and the authorities had, it appeared, no alternative but to take the step they did.

Lane, of course, could have contested the case in the courts, but he was confined to his bed with a chill at the time and may have felt unequal to putting up a fight. Moreover, the very last thing he wanted was to get a reputation for purveying 'top-shelf' literature, a stigma which, even if he won his case, he would hardly

## CLEVER PUBLICITY

have altogether escaped. He therefore decided, but not without some reluctance, to cease publication of the book and as far as possible to secure the return of such copies as had been issued. He had no ambition to rival the martyrdom of Mr. Ernest Vizetelly, he who had suffered a term of imprisonment for publishing translations of Zola's novels. There seems no doubt that Mr. Seltzer's version (facetious members of the public used to apply at Messrs. Mudies' for 'a Sudermann and Seltzer') was in fact unnecessarily crude. Some year or so later, Lane published another translation of the same book by Miss Beatrice Marshall, which, while in no sense bowdlerised, was a model of good taste. A propos of this version, Lane brought off a clever and very characteristic piece of advertising. He asked several men and women of eminence to give their opinion as to the moral character of the book, and prefixed their pronouncements to the new edition, which had a wide and immediate success. If the halo of *The Bodley Head* had been temporarily dimmed, it now shone forth again with all its pristine lustre.

Lane, for some reason or another, always liked to be considered a Quaker. According to his own statement he was a Quaker, when, that is to say, he was not a Huguenot, which he always was at least once a year when he dined with the governors of the French Huguenot hospital at Hackney. But Quaker or not, Huguenot or not, he was baptised, married and buried by the Church of England.

For a Quaker, even a *soi-disant* one, it would have been a terrible thing to lay to his conscience that he had helped to plunge a whole continent, indeed a whole world, into war, yet that, with what measure of truth I know not, he is said to have done, albeit unwittingly.

## TWO VIEWS OF GERMANY

When he was invited, a year or two before the War, to publish *The Foundations of the Nineteenth Century* by one Houston Stewart Chamberlain, why should he have refused? He had probably never read the book, and why should he have read it seeing that it was Lord Redesdale, its translator, who invited him to publish it? Publish it he did, and observing the warmly eulogistic reception accorded to it in this country, the Kaiser had good grounds for assuming that we agreed with the main contention of the book, which was, in a nutshell, that the Germans are the salt of the earth. Into how many editions the book went in Germany I do not know, but it was a large number, and when at length the War, which so many people had thought impossible, actually broke out, the Kaiser showed his gratitude to Herr Chamberlain by decorating him with the Iron Cross.

By this time the English critics had changed their views about Mr. Houston Stewart Chamberlain and *The Bodley Head* tried to forget his existence.

On the other hand, and as a contrast to this book, which, it is said, went to the Kaiser's head, and turned him into a complete and dangerous megalomaniac, putting the finishing touch on his mental disorder, Lane published that famous anti-militarist tract which was called 'Life in a German Garrison Town', by Lieutenant Bilse, and which had been officially suppressed in Germany, Bilse himself having been tried by Court Martial and dismissed the army. Lane published it and it went into several editions. Wilfrid Jackson, who is as skilful a draughtsman as he is accomplished as a writer and translator, drew an amusing picture of Lane in a frock-coat being marched along to prison amid a posse of goose-stepping German soldiers (Lane was

## A GIFTED TRANSLATOR

also goose-stepping), with spiked helmets and fixed bayonets, while another warrior with immense epaulettes and a gigantic sabre is shouting 'Off with his Bodley head!' The picture, but not the legend, was published in *The Tatler*. Wilfrid Jackson, it may be observed, had an extraordinary gift for translation, especially translation into verse, which he did with amazing facility. Whenever any versifying had to be done, such for example as a poem quoted by Anatole France in one of his books, it was generally Wilfrid Jackson who turned it into verse as graceful as the original. 'Give it to Wilfrid Jackson,' Chapman used to say; 'he will knock it off in no time.'

Of course Lane's major effort in the sphere of translation was the complete English edition of the Works of Anatole France. I am pretty certain it was Chapman who proposed the scheme, for Chapman always took an interest in contemporary French and Italian literature, and here, before going on to speak of Anatole France, I must make mention of a work of which Chapman was very proud. This was his translation of Professor G. P. Clerici's work on Caroline of Brunswick, which, together with a long introduction from Chapman's pen, was published in a sumptuous volume, by *The Bodley Head*, under the title of *A Queen of Indiscretions*. In spite of my admiration and affection for Chapman, I confess I have never done more, and now certainly never shall do more, than dip into the book here and there, or look at the full-page prints (there are fifty-seven of them) with which it is adorned. But it is not necessary to read it through, or even to read more than a sentence or two at random here and there, to be reminded of Chapman, and that is its main use in my eyes. With its rich red binding, the gold coat-of-

arms and the beautiful lettering on the binding, it affords an example of Bodley Head book-production at its best.

It was Chapman, then, who first 'sensed' Anatole France. He communicated his awareness to Lane and—it shows the power of his persuasiveness—Lane adopted the idea with enthusiasm, and, in due course, accompanied by Mrs. Lane, went over to interview 'The Master'. Lane had no French, despite his days—and nights—in Paris with Stuart Merrill and some others of which lurid tales are told. A French friend of mine who was much with Anatole France at that time and was presented when Mr. and Mrs. Lane arrived, gave me an account of the scene. Preceded by his lady, Lane, he said, came in and immediately began to stare about him through his *pince-nez*, looking, my friend said, as though he had come to value the furniture. (*Il regardait autour de lui comme un commissaire-priseur.*) Mrs. Lane wearied and worried 'the Master' by asking him what he thought of this, that, and the other English author till the old man was nearly forced to cry for mercy. He had probably not read or heard of any single one of them. Certainly he had not unless they had been translated into French, for he knew not a word of English. Nevertheless, when they came back to London, Lane had an agreement in his pocket, together with I know not how many signed mementoes, prints, portraits and so forth, of *le Maître*. As for the agreement, Lane and Calmann-Levy had seen to that. And so the great series began. What a business it was deciding on the details of the format! The type, Caslon old-face, end-papers by Aubrey Beardsley, initials by Henry Ospovat, red cloth, gilt lettering, gilt tops, uncut edges, demy 8vo, and all for six shillings, the

## ANATOLE FRANCE IN LONDON

price of an ordinary English novel. The prospectus was, in its appearance and contents, something of a work of art. Anatole France was described as 'a pagan, haunted by the preoccupation of Christ'. He was 'saintly and Rabelaisian' without incongruity. 'There have been many difficulties to encounter', the prospectus said, 'in completing arrangements for a uniform edition, though perhaps the chief barrier to publication here has been the fact that his writings are not for babes—but for men and the mothers of men'. Finally he was said to share with Tolstoi the distinction of being the greatest and most daring student of humanity living. If this was advertising, it was advertising with skill, if you like with artfulness.

In 1913, Anatole France paid a visit to this country. For more than a year it had been talked about. At last 'the Master' made up his mind, and came, giving no more than a week's notice. A committee was hastily formed, but the task of organising the arrangements devolved on Sir Thomas Barclay, Mr. Holford Knight, and, of course, John Lane. Whitelaw Reid, the American Ambassador, had said he would place Dorchester House at M. France's disposal for a reception, but when the time came Whitelaw Reid was out of England. There was to have been a grand reception at No. 10 Downing Street, but this dwindled to an afternoon tea-party with Mrs. Asquith (the Prime Minister could not be there), at which John Lane was present. It must have been rather an ordeal. John Lane spoke no French, Anatole France no English, and in the circumstances Lane must have stood a very good chance of being left out in the cold. He took good care not to incur that fate. Out of this visit arose one to the Tennant Collection. Then of course the distinguished foreigner had to go

## THE PRECIOUS GLOVE

to the National Gallery. The Suffragettes were in violent eruption at this period and many of the rooms were shut. John Lane came to the rescue. The guest was introduced to Sir Charles Holroyd (then the Director) and Mr. Collins Baker. The closed doors were opened and Anatole France was lost in admiration of Goya's 'Dona Isabel Corbo de Porcel'. Then came a visit to Lord Ellesmere's, Bridgewater House. Next it was the turn of No. 8 Lancaster Gate Terrace, where John Lane 'had (as he put it) the *joy* of offering him some hospitality in my own home where his manifest interest in some of my pictures and *objets d'art* enhanced their value even for me'. Mrs. Lane piously preserved a glove which had been rendered sacrosanct by the pressure of the Master's hand. By an unfortunate mischance this unique relic was afterwards inadvertently sent to the cleaners. Then followed a visit to *The Bodley Head*. The first thing he saw on entering Lane's room was his own portrait by Guth, in which he is portrayed seated in his grey *houppelande* crowned with his *calotte rouge*: rather a stiff, wooden production I venture to think, only less objectionable than the portrait by Van Dongen with its splodges of pale violent and dirty yellow. When he saw the latter, Anatole France held up his hands and exclaimed in dismay, 'You've made me look like a ripe camembert (*un camembert coulant*).' Another picture on Lane's wall was 'The Yellow Book', by Miss Gertrude Hammond. This picture, admired by Whistler—it was reproduced in Volume VI of *The Yellow Book*—represents a young man reading from a volume of that periodical to a blushing girl. Lane pointed out the blush. 'Why is she blushing?' France enquired, to which Lane replied, 'He is evidently reading your story to her.'



‘THE YELLOW BOOK’  
From a painting by Gertrude Hammond



## A LETTER FROM HARDY

Then came the crown, the climax of the visit, the banquet at the Savoy. Poor Frederic Chapman, the instigator, inspirer and editor of Lane's series, Chapman who had toiled like a slave at licking these translations into shape, had no part in any of these festivities or functions. He stopped in his home at Twickenham, stricken with his last illness. Thomas Hardy was unable to be present. 'I particularly regret', he wrote to Lane, 'that though one of the Committee, I am unable to be present to meet M. France at the reception on Wednesday. In these days, when the literature of narrative and verse seems to be losing its qualities as an art, and to be assuming a structureless, conglomerate character, it is a privilege that we should have had come into our midst a writer who is faithful to the principles that make for permanence, who never forgets the value of organic form and symmetry, the force of reserve, and the emphasis of understatement, even in his lighter works.'

'The emphasis of understatement!' Not all of Anatole France's eulogists believed in that. Here is an outburst from one of them.

'This article will not be criticism; it will be panegyric. I cannot write critically about the work of Anatole France, for he is the literary hero of my riper years. I do not believe that Thorfin Karlsefne was more astonished and delighted when he discovered America than I was when, in my sixtieth year, this great literary luminary swept into my ken. . . . Of all the famous or popular men alive upon this planet Anatole France is to me the greatest. There is no writer to compare with him and he has had few peers amongst the greatest geniuses of past ages and all climes. . . . *Penguin Island* is a masterpiece and a classic. It is, in my

## AN AWKWARD DILEMMA

opinion, a greater work than *Gargantua* or *Don Quixote* or *Sartor Resartus* or *Tristram Shandy*; but it never rises to the altitude of pure genius which is reached in the finest parts of the great Frenchman's most human work, *At the Sign of the Reine Pédaouque*, and so on. Never before, Lane said, had he known an article 'to have such a direct and abiding influence upon the actual sales of an author's works'. Certainly it left little to be added by posterity. But such extravagance brings its own reaction—and Anatole France had good reason to cry, 'Save me from my friends'. Preposterous praise, however well-intentioned, is a terrible disservice, as Stephen Phillips, long before he died, discovered.

That banquet, at which all the lion-hunters were present in full cry, has been described over and over again. The Master had come over accompanied, not only by his medical adviser, but also by Mademoiselle Emma Laprévotte, the *gouvernante*, or housekeeper, of his dead Egeria. This lady, with whom he was, for testamentary reasons, to be united in legal wedlock some years later, presented no small difficulty to the showmen. 'The Master', when he went to visit the 'great houses', could not for the life of him understand how it was they always tried to persuade him to leave her at the hotel, and at the banquet, at which Lord Redesdale presided, she was a nice problem. She was dissembled somewhere in the body of the room. Poor 'Ticot'! She was a kind, simple-hearted, affectionate body, and, though greatly bewildered at this hugger-mugger treatment, took it all in good part. She rendered me good service in after years '*auprès du maître*', of whom she took great care, seeing that he was properly wrapped up before he went out, even kneeling down to tie his shoe-laces, as if he had been her little boy.

Anatole France spoke about the English novel, its origin and development, and then glided into politics. And some of us could not guess why he kept saying, with what seemed rather wearisome insistence, 'travaillons de concert à la paix du monde'. Eight months later Armageddon had begun!

After the banquet, the Chairman, ablaze with decorations, led the lion downstairs to a salon. Hard upon their heels, the illustrious pack followed, baying loud, and one by one were presented, as to a potentate.

I thought—I was carried away by a sort of 'hubris'—that if I was lucky enough to get near the great man I would say something really original, something that would impress me on his memory for ever. And so, as I took the hand he languidly extended, I remarked that I had known and loved him ever since he was a little boy like that—and I pointed to my knee. This galvanised him into attention. He looked puzzled, as well he might, and a little alarmed. Is the man mad or drunk? he probably asked himself. Then I hastened to explain that I had translated *Le Livre de mon ami* and *Pierre Nozière*, books in which he describes how he walked with his nurse Madame Mathias along by the river on the *rive gauche*. At that he took my hand in both of his and with his grave expressive eyes gazed upon me with a smile that seemed to wrap me in an aureole. When, by the way, some years later, I went to see him at the Villa Saïd, he had completely forgotten me. Next day, at the Fabian reception, Anatole France referred to Shaw as 'the Molière of England' and kissed him. Shaw wavered a moment and returned the compliment—amid the enthusiastic plaudits of the company.

This Library Edition was on the whole a success, at any rate a *succès d'estime*. Some of the individual

## A GREAT IDEA

volumes, such as *The Red Lily*, *The Crime of Sylvestre Bonnard*, *Penguin Island*, *At the Sign of the Reine Pédaueque*, *The Revolt of the Angels*, *Thaïs*, were several times reprinted. Anatole France told me later that he thought *Penguin Island* his worst book, and that his best prose was to be found in *The Revolt of the Angels*. He was no doubt alluding to the narrative of Nectaire, which is a sort of amplification of the Silenus of Virgil with an undertone suggestive of Renan's *Prière sur l'Acropole*. But there were other volumes which did not do so well, and a few which had little or no popular appeal—at least in their 'library' form.

It was when the War had been in progress for some two years that a great change came over the fortunes of Anatole France in this country, indeed throughout the English-speaking world. Hitherto his works in English had been mainly restricted to the houses of the well-to-do, where they were to be seen ranged along in their imposing red and gold like a regiment of Grenadier Guards. In which particular lobe of the five that then composed *The Bodley Head* the idea originated—I have an idea it was Crocket's—I cannot say for certain. At any rate to one of them it occurred to republish the whole series in a half-crown edition using the old plates for the purpose. The size was to be crown octavo, which meant there was no excess of margin. Nevertheless the page was very presentable. If any members of the firm were doubtful of the success of this new venture, their fears were at once allayed. These little orange-covered books were soon to be seen everywhere, everywhere Anatole France was the great topic of conversation. Clerks and typists, tea-shop waitresses, the intelligentsia of Bloomsbury, the *virtuosi* of Chelsea, all eagerly began to imbibe the easy scepticism, the graceful if somewhat libidinous

## THE WORLD GOES ORANGE

philosophy of the Sage of the Villa Saïd. Not to know Jérôme Coignard, M. Bergeret or Dr. Trublet was to write yourself down a barbarian. London went orange. The conflagration spread to the suburbs, from Balham to Barnet, from Ealing to East Ham, and in no long time the provinces followed suit. Sailors and globe-trotters found them displayed for sale as far away as Singapore and Shanghai. They conquered the world. All the Homais in existence were soon complacently quoting or imitating Anatole France. Publishers who had said, 'I don't think Lanes did too well with that Anatole France venture of theirs', were now consumed with envy. I, as editor of the series, had the task of crystallising the contents of each volume in a paragraph of print on the dust-jacket. I became a blurb-writer for the time being—a truly detestable task. I was told I did it well. Then there were other, elaborately illustrated editions of Anatole France, which tapped a different public, *éditions de luxe*, big demy octavos bound in black and gold. They looked like a continental funeral, but the Americans liked them. The illustrator was usually Frank Papé, but John Austen, a remarkable man who, once a carpenter, became a great celebrity, the man of the hour, did the pictures for *The Gods are Athirst*, and marvellous pictures they were.

Of course Lanes published a good number of French historical memoirs and works of fiction, none of which call for any special mention. One book, I remember, over which I took a great deal of trouble, Herbert Jenkins spoilt for me. This was General de Piépape's biography of the Duchesse du Maine. One of the principal characters in the narrative was of course the Regent Louis Philippe Joseph, Duc d'Orléans, who was represented in the English version by a portrait of

## THE CREATOR OF 'BRAMBLE'

'Philippe Egalité' which Jenkins procured from somewhere.

I had never felt very greatly drawn to Herbert Jenkins, the creator of 'Bindle'. He had elbowed my old friend Frederic Chapman out into the cold and sat in his chair, arrayed in a frock-coat and looking every inch the Manager. However, he tried at length to manage Lane, and went. He thought no small beer of himself, had immense push, inexhaustible energy and worked furiously hard. It was work, they say, that eventually killed him.

Of André Maurois's books *The Silence of Colonel Bramble*, *Ariel*, *Disraeli*, *Byron*, *Dickens*, I need hardly make mention, so well known are they. M. Maurois enjoys a great popularity in this country, some of which is assuredly due to the wonderful skill with which he has been rendered into English by Mr. Hamish Miles. M. Maurois's talent, so Ariel-like, so graceful, so delicate, is such as to make it eminently suitable that his work should be sponsored by *The Bodley Head*, the house of Max Beerbohm, Wilde, 'Saki' and the rest.

One other ambitious venture in the way of translation was an English version of Elie Faure's *History of Art*, to which may be added a portentous volume of miscellaneous letterpress and pictures called the *Book of Belgium's Gratitude*, of which the editor—W. J. Locke—was rewarded with the Order of the Crown of Leopold. The proceeds, I think, went to the Belgian refugees.

It was, I think, in connexion with a translation I had made of a book about Napoleon and Murat—*Napoléon et le roi Murat*, by Albert Espitalier, an excellent piece of historical work—that I came into contact with A. M. Broadley, the author, or compiler of a book called *Napoléon in Caricature*, which was published at *The Bodley Head*.



ANATOLE FRANCE AND JOHN LANE  
leaving No. 10 Downing Street on December 11th, 1913  
(with Lady Barclay and Miss Winifred Stephens)

*Photo by Haines*



## A PRODIGIOUS MAN

Lane invited me to meet Broadley at lunch in order to discuss the matter of illustrations for my translation. Broadley was a man of prodigious size. Arriving one day at Lane's in a hansom, he tendered the cabby his proper fare. The man looked at it and grumbled.

'Well,' said Broadley, 'it's the right amount for the distance, isn't it?'

'Yes,' said the man, 'it's right enough for the distance, but look at the weight!'

At this time Broadley (who used to call Lane 'honest John' with rather an offensive emphasis on the 'honest') was taking some kind of pill after his meals as an aid to digestion. Whether they were a homœopathic remedy or not I do not know, but they were excessively minute, certainly no bigger than a pin's head. Unfortunately in shaking it out of the glass phial in which he carried them, he let one of these precious pills fall on to the carpet. Broadley insisted on finding it. Lane whispered to me that we must humour him, and for a good five minutes the elephantine Broadley, Lane, myself and the waiter were down on our knees groping about for this ridiculous pill. We never found it, and Broadley was plunged in gloom.

I was particularly anxious to translate Romain Rolland's *Jean Christophe*, and did everything in my power to prevail on Lane to acquire the rights. My efforts were unsuccessful and that formidable task was eventually performed by Gilbert Cannan. Lane said it would not have 'paid'; and I imagine he was not far wrong.

When the unhappy Chapman found himself confronted with the task of reducing the heterogeneous productions of the translators of Anatole France to some level of general excellence, he succeeded, but the burden broke him. His brain gave way under the strain. It turned

## AN ANATOLIAN PARADOX

a bibliophile into a militant and destructive bibliophobe. Before he died Chapman took to tearing up and flinging out of window the treasures he had so patiently and so ardently collected.

Later on Lane picked his translators with more care. He came to realise that the work of an artist can only be rendered by an artist and not always even at that. One book—I forget now what it was—he asked Laurence Housman to translate. Housman, I understand, said he would—for twenty thousand pounds!

Many, too many to enumerate, of *The Bodley Head* books have been translated into various foreign tongues. One of the latest to be thus honoured is an exquisite version by Mademoiselle Léo Lack, of Kenneth Grahame's *Golden Age*.

It is Shelley who, in his 'Defence of Poetry', says the last word on the subject of translation. 'Hence the Vanity of translation; it were as wise to cast a violet into a crucible that you might discover the formal principle of its colour and odour, as seek to transfuse from one language into another the creations of a poet.' Or of any writer of what Keats called 'distilled prose'.

I once propounded this idea to Anatole France. 'Maître', said I, 'translation is an impossibility; there's no such thing.'

Whereupon he said, 'To recognise that is the first step to success. *Allez-y!*'

## SOME WITS AND HUMORISTS

THE CATALOGUES of John Lane abound in Wits and Humorists of the first water, as varied in character and appeal as Max Beerbohm, Neil Lyons, H. H. Munro ('Saki'), G. K. Chesterton, R. M. Freeman, Stephen Leacock, Owen Seaman, and 'a great many more of lesser degree'. But judged purely and simply as a humorist the greatest of these is Leacock. There is a depth and breadth of humanity about the humour of this learned professor of economics at the McGill University, a large generosity that gives him a place above all the others. Though most of his work is in prose, Leacock can turn a pretty enough verse when he wants to, as witness this from his 'Moonbeams from the Larger Lunacy': it is the poem of 'Lord Ullin's Daughter', expressed as a problem in Trigonometry. An introduction explains the problem thus: A party of three persons, a Scotch nobleman, a young lady and an elderly boatman, stand on the banks of a river (R), which, for private reasons, they desire to cross. Their only means of transport is a boat, of which the boatman, if squared, is able to row at a rate proportional to the square of the distance. The boat, however, has a leak (S), through which a quantity of water passes sufficient to sink it after traversing an indeterminate distance (D). Given the square of the boatman and the mean situation of all

‘ACROSS THE STORMY WATER’

concerned, to find whether the boat will pass the river safely or sink.

‘A chieftain to the Highlands bound  
Cried “Boatman, do not tarry!  
And I’ll give you a silver pound  
To row me o’er the ferry.”  
Before them raged the angry tide  
 $X^2 + Y$  from side to side.

Out spake the hardy Highland wight,  
“I’ll go, my chief, I’m ready;  
It is not for your silver bright,  
But for your winsome lady.”  
And yet he seemed to manifest  
A certain hesitation;  
His head was sunk upon his breast  
In puzzled calculation.

Suppose the river  $X + Y$   
And call the distance  $Q$ ,  
Then dare we thus the gods defy,  
I think we dare, don’t you?  
Our floating power expressed in words  
Is  $X + \frac{4}{3}Y$ .

“Oh, haste thee, haste,” the lady cries,  
“Though tempests round us gather,  
I’ll face the raging of the skies,  
But please cut out the Algebra.”

The boat has left the stormy shore (S)  
A stormy C before her  
 $C_1 C_2 C_3 C_4$   
The tempest gathers o’er her.  
The thunder rolls, the lightnings smite ‘em  
And the rain falls ad infinitum.

## HOMER IN THE SCHOOLS

In vain the aged boatman strains,  
His heaving sides reveals his pains;  
The angry water gains apace  
Both of his sides and half his base,  
Till, as he sits, he seems to lose  
The square of his hypotenuse.

The boat advanced to  $X + 2$   
Lord Ullin reached the fixed point Q,  
Then the boat sank from human eye,  
OY OY<sup>2</sup> OGY.'

That was not, by a long way, the only revision Leacock would make of some of our most valued literary treasures. See, for example, how he would modernise Homer. 'Take', he says, 'the passage in the First Book of Homer that describes Ajax the Greek dashing into the battle in front of Troy. Here is the way it runs (as nearly as I remember) in the usual word-for-word translation of the classroom, as done by the very best professor, his spectacles glittering with the literary rapture of it.

“Then he too Ajax on the one hand leaped (or possibly jumped) into the fight wearing on the other hand yes certainly a steel corslet (or possibly a bronze under tunic) and on his head of course yes without a doubt he had a helmet with a tossing plume taken from the mane (or perhaps extracted from the tail) of some horse which once fed along the banks of the Scamander (and it sees the herd and raises its head and paws the ground) and in his hand a shield worth a hundred oxen and on his knees too especially in particular greaves made by some cunning artificer (or perhaps blacksmith) and he blows the fire and it is hot. Thus Ajax leapt (or, better, was propelled from behind) into the fight.”

‘Now that’s grand stuff. There is no doubt of it.

## HOMER UP TO DATE

There's a wonderful movement and force to it. You can almost see it move, it goes so fast. But the modern reader can't get it. It won't mean to him what it meant to the early Greek. The setting, the costume, the scene has all got to be changed in order to let the reader have a real equivalent to judge just how good the Greek verse is. In my translation I alter it just a little, not much, but just enough to give the passage a form that reproduces the proper literary value of the verses, without losing anything of the majesty. It describes, I may say, the Directors of the American Industrial Stocks rushing into the Balkan War cloud—

‘ “Then there came rushing to the shock of war  
Mr. McNicoll of the C.P.R.  
He wore suspenders and about his throat  
High rose the collar of a sealskin coat,  
He had on gaiters and he wore a tie,  
He had his trousers buttoned good and high,  
About his waist a woollen undervest  
Bought from a sad-eyed farmer of the West  
(And every time he clips a sheep he sees  
Some bloated plutocrat who ought to freeze).  
Thus in the Stock Exchange he burst to view,  
Leaped to the post, and shouted, ‘Ninety-two’.”

There! That's Homer, the real thing! Just as it sounded to the rude crowd of Greek peasants who sat in a ring and guffawed at the rhymes and watched the minstrel stamp it out into “feet” as he recited it!

Stephen Leacock has had his eulogists, whole armies of them. He is admirably summed up by a critic in the *Morning Post* who says, ‘He is the subtlest of all Transatlantic humorists and . . . might almost be defined as the discoverer of a method of combining English and

## PUNCH ON LEACOCK

American Humour.' That is well and truly said, but there is one testimony still more eloquent, and that is Mr. Philip Guedalla's confession that one of Leacock's books made him laugh out loud in an omnibus.

But the most graceful tribute to Leacock was contained in *Punch* of February 14, 1917, by whose permission I reprint it here. It surely came from the accomplished pen of Sir Owen Seaman.

'The life that is flagrantly double  
Conflicting in conduct and aim  
Is seldom untainted by trouble  
And commonly closes in shame;  
But no such anxieties pester  
Your dual existence, which links  
The functions of don and of jester  
High thought and high jinks.

Your earliest venture perhaps is  
Unique in the rapture intense  
Displayed in these riotous Lapses  
From all that could savour of sense,  
Recalling the "goaks" and the gladness  
Of one whom we elders adored—  
The methodical midsummer madness  
Of Artemus Ward.

With you, O enchanting Canadian,  
We laughed till you gave us a stitch  
In our sides at the wondrous Arcadian  
Exploits of the indolent rich;  
We loved your satirical sniping,  
And followed, far over "the pond",  
The lure of your whimsical piping  
Behind the Beyond.

## THE MODERN PEPYS

In place of the squalor that stretches  
    Unchanged o'er the realist's page,  
The sunshine that glows in your Sketches  
    Is potent our griefs to assuage;  
And when, on your mettlesome charger,  
    Full tilt against reason you go,  
Your Lunacy's finer and larger  
    Than any I know.

The faults of ephemeral fiction,  
    Exotic, erotic or smart,  
The vice of delirious diction,  
    The latest excesses of Art—  
You flay in felicitous fashion,  
    With dexterous choice of your tools,  
A scourge for unsavoury passion,  
    A hammer for fools.

And yet, though so freakish and dashing,  
    You are not the slave of your fun,  
For there's nobody better at lashing  
    The crimes and the cant of the Hun.  
Anyhow, I'd be proud as a peacock  
    To have it inscribed on my tomb:  
“He followed the footsteps of Leacock  
    In banishing gloom.”

It would be a rough and ready but a fairly sound mode of classification to divide humorous books into books that make you laugh and books that make you smile. Obviously Leacock's books belong to the former category. So also, I think, but perhaps a little less decisively, does the *Diary of the Great Warr*, a prodigiously skilful pastiche of Pepys's Diary in which not only the language and mode of expression, but the mental—and moral—

## A CUNNING PASTICHE

attitude of the great Diarist are reproduced with extraordinary verisimilitude. I understand that Mr. Freeman still keeps it up in the pages of the *Radio Times*. 'Custom', one gathers, 'hath made it in him a property of easiness' thus to discourse, and apparently he even thinks in the Pepysian idiom. Here is a taste of his quality:

1915. February 9.

At the club this day Squillinger tells me of what a perplexity he hath with one of his platoon of Volunteers, to wit, a dry-grocer, that would put up his ombrello at the falling of rain during squad-drill; and when Squillinger bids him furl it, the fellow retorts that he enlisted as a dry-grocer, and hath a right to remain such, rain it never so, at which the whole platoon to burst out a-laughing. So Squillinger to report this mutineer to the capn., who, instead of dismissing him, letteth him go with a reprimand, being (as Squillinger hath since heard) entered in the grocer's book for a debt of 15 pounds.

1915. March 13.

To the Grosvenor Gallery in Bond Street for a private view of pictures, shewn by the National Portrait Society. A great company and many notables, among others the Duchesse of Rutland and my Lady Diana Manners, but I could not get speech with them. Some good pictures, but many indifferent; and some clean crazy, as the mode now is with the young painters that would gain reputacion, to whom I would not trust my face, not if they should pay me their guineas instead of taking mine. Many pictures by Belgians, and one by A. Rassenfosse whereat I knew not whether to laugh or blush; to wit, of a saucy strumpet sitting on her bed, as naked as Mother Eve, and on the coverlet beside her a man's silk hat, mighty smart and

## HECTOR HUGH MUNRO

shiny. Which as I stood by, comes a certain madam, with another in her company, and 'What a creature, my dear!' says she; 'who is she?' To which her friend, having the catalogue, 'No. 125', says she; 'the Dowager Lady Leconfield.' Only 'twas the next picture, and she hath mixt the numbers; which methought a droll mistake, and did set all around a-tittering.

What shall I say, that has not been already said and better said by others concerning the work of the inimitable Saki? Hector Hugh Munro was born in 1870 in Burmah, where his father, Colonel C. A. Munro, of the Bengal Staff Corps, was stationed. He was educated in England, France and Germany; entered the Burmah police; was invalidated home with fever; began contributing to the *Westminster Gazette* and in 1902 went to the Balkans for the *Morning Post*. Later on he represented that paper in St. Petersburg and Paris and returning to London in 1908 devoted himself to story-writing.

At the outbreak of war he was well over military age, and with his knowledge of languages could without difficulty have obtained a comparatively easy and safe appointment in which he could have felt he was serving his country well. But he came of a fighting stock and, as he himself put it, it seemed only fitting that the author of *When William Came* should go to meet William half-way. Accordingly, he enlisted in King Edward's Horse as a trooper. He afterwards transferred, probably with the idea of getting quicker to the Front, to the Royal Fusiliers. He steadfastly refused to take a commission, not because he objected to the responsibility of being an officer, but because, in his judgment, it was a 'non-coms'

## A NOBLE EXAMPLE

war and he believed that as a 'non-com' he could be of more use. 'He discovered', said Lord Charnwood in a letter to the *Westminster Gazette*, 'a peculiar power to calm the fears and raise the spirits of young and ignorant soldiers, and he was not willing to forgo the opportunity of easy intercourse on equal terms, in which he could exercise that power.' He was killed at the Battle of Beaumont Hamel on the 24th November, 1916. 'He has left behind him', said the *Morning Post*, 'work of an originality that is the secure foundation of a literary reputation; but he has left also an example of patriotic self-sacrifice which is even more precious.'

"Saki's" most conspicuous gift', said Sir John Squire in an article contributed to *Land and Water* in February, 1919, 'was the invention of monstrously absurd plots, unfolded so gravely that one is quite persuaded of their actuality. I do not think I am called to give away many of them in advance. But among others that we are treated to here are the stories of how Alethia Debchance, who had been brought up in fiction, encountered life; how Lola Pevensie dreamt the name of the Derby winner; how Octavian Ruttle did penance for shooting a kitten; how Mr. Scarrick made a grocer's shop pay; how Reggie Bruttle invented a scheme for canalising his friends' quarrelsome passions; and why the Suffragettes put up replicas of the Queen Victoria Memorial all over England. I will not enter into particulars; but I give my word that they could not be more grotesque.

The qualities of "Saki's" plots are present also in his detail. Each paragraph and sentence, like each story, is perfectly curved and polished. You have to look a long way for anything slipshod or tired. He could do the ordinary epigram of commerce in the ordinary shapes; but even that, when he did it, had a slight touch that

## A FRIEND'S TRIBUTE

marked it as his own, as in, "We live in a series of rushes —like the infant Moses." He was a master of the kind of grotesque juxtaposition involved here. "How pretty the yew-trees look at this time of year," interposed a lady with a soft, silvery voice that suggested a chinchilla muff painted by Whistler. Then there is the competition of evidence as to ghosts, capped by "My uncle's ghost was seen by a Rural Dean who was also a Justice of the Peace." How, in the most laboured of emphatic paragraphs, could a writer better convey the very quintessence of reliability?" asks Sir John Squire. This of the writer and his art. Here is something that sheds an invaluable light on what manner of man that writer was: I knew that, when they came home from India, on Colonel Munro's retirement from active service, 'Saki's' people had settled down at Buckleigh, just above Westward Ho! A lady who was a neighbour of the Munros and on terms of close friendship with them, has furnished me with the following interesting and revealing details regarding 'Saki' as she knew him.

'I did not know him', she writes, 'until after he came back from Burmah, where a few months of the climate had almost killed him. He was a wreck from fever and was supposed to have come home to die. He stayed with his father, Colonel Munro, at Hillcrest, Buckleigh, until he was well enough to make a fresh start, and then I think he went to London and began his journalistic work. I saw little of him but he was always interesting to meet, and a clever, witty talker in the quiet, condensed style of his literary work. He might be doing something as ordinary as handing the cake plates at an "At Home", but his originality flavoured most of his brief remarks and most people found it worth while to listen to that low voice. He must often have mightily irritated the stodgy

and slow-in-the-uptake; what he said was sometimes so keen and double-edged. The cynicism that came out in his stories always seemed to me a mask to hide another and a different man. He had many friends and one who was poor, ill or otherwise down on his luck might have surprised anyone who only knew "Saki". Small animals, kittens and birds would have agreed with the friends.'

I think, from what I have heard—for I never met 'Saki'—that he was, as this letter hints—a little given to scorning in his quiet but effective way off people in his own 'station of life', a practice which, if detected, does not always tend to enhance the popularity of the man who indulges in it. No doubt he scorned to whet his satire, or sharpen his wit, on those who had not had his 'advantages', and that perhaps is why he was always popular with them.

From no review, however cursory, of the humorists of *The Bodley Head* must one other name be omitted, and that is the name of Neil Lyons, who, inasmuch as he succeeds in conveying, in all his representations of the vulgar and the sordid, a suggestion of the *lacrimæ rerum*, the 'sense of tears in mortal things', is perhaps one of the greatest of them all. 'Arthur's' and 'Sixpenny Pieces' are inimitable pictures of London slum-life, comic yet instinct with a large and compassionate humanity. They are, of their kind, classics and must not, cannot be forgotten.

## THE PUBLISHER

IT is generally admitted that Lane was a shrewd man of business. In the mouths of some, the description is probably a euphemism for something less complimentary. It has been said that one or two super-eminent novelists who came to him and then took their goods elsewhere, would have remained with him if he had been less parsimonious. I believe there is something in this report; I believe that where business was concerned he was keen almost to the point of meanness. But it must be borne in mind that Lane never had much money to play with, at any rate not in the early days. When he started with Mathews, the capital resources of the business consisted in the old books which each of them put into the pool, together with a little hard cash. This was augmented, a little later on, by a sum of £2,000 which Lane borrowed from a lady interested in antique china. Until his marriage Lane, if not a poor man, was a man who had to spread his butter very thin.

But, in regard to his reputed hard-bargaining, it should be remembered that there were two approaches to Lane's room. If, having been dismissed through the shop by the door that opens into Vigo Street, you had taken it into your head to seek re-admittance through the private entrance in Albany, and if you had asked him,

#### A NICE DISTINCTION

not as a publisher, but as a friend, to help you with a loan, it is ten to one he would have done his best to come to your assistance. Any publisher with slender capital resources would have to drive a hardish bargain if he intended to survive. Like Mrs. Battle and her whist, Lane believed in observing 'all the rigours of the game'. For example, I did a good deal of translating work for him and had my versions typed. Not without some demur, it must be confessed, he agreed to pay for the typing. Later on, I wrote an original book and, as usual, sent him the typist's account, but he declined to pay it, and for this reason: A translator was doing a piece of work imposed upon him by the firm; he was, as it were, a member of the staff, an employee, and, as such, the firm naturally paid him any expense he might incur in doing the firm's work. Not so, an author. An author approaches the firm, so to speak, *ab extra*, and would naturally bring his work in the most acceptable form. The distinction seemed to me to be a nice one, but I had to accept it.

But if hard things have been said about John Lane, his detractors are put to silence by this tribute from a brilliant writer of world-wide reputation who was his friend for more than thirty years and published all his books with him, I mean the late W. J. Locke.

'As one of few British authors', wrote Mr. Locke in a letter to *The Times*, 'who can sit as I do now at this moment of writing, and see a few feet away a line of thirty volumes under the same publisher's imprint, may I be allowed to pay a few little words of tribute to the memory of my dear friend and publisher, John Lane? My continuous relations with *The Bodley Head*, in a business way, and with John Lane personally, began over thirty years ago. I mourn the most loyal of friends, the most wise

## THE WONDER HOUSE

of counsellors, and the most honourable of partners in what, after all, is the work of a lifetime.

'It is not for me to tell the fascinating story of *The Bodley Head*; but no literary historian in the future can ever pass it by, because it was the Wonder House of those fermenting 'nineties whence sprang men of infinitely reaching influence in letters and art—the Wonder House created by the subtle and sympathetic genius of John Lane, Englishman through and through, and (as was his pride) Devonshire-yeoman bred.'

One may wonder whether Lane, if he had been starting a publishing business to-day, would have made such a startling success. It is possible, for he was a man of wonderful adaptability; but it is doubtful. What, to begin with, is a 'successful' publisher? To-day, I think the answer would be, 'one who makes publishing pay, one who makes money, and a great deal of it, out of publishing.' In short, the criterion of success is mainly commercial.

Not long ago, a publisher contributed to a popular newspaper an article which he entitled 'How to succeed as a Publisher'. In his youth, he said, while still a boy at school, he wrote to the late Mr. J. M. Dent (the founder of *Everyman's Library*), and asked him what were the qualifications necessary for the making of a successful publisher. This was Mr. Dent's reply:

- (1) A publisher must be a man fond of hard work.
- (2) He must have a large knowledge of English literature, and he ought to know French and German and a good deal of the classics.
- (3) He ought to know a good deal about art.
- (4) He ought to know a good deal about human nature.

## A GREAT PERSONALITY

- (5) He wants a lot of money.
- (6) Above all, he must learn to possess his soul in patience.
- (7) He should read the English Bible in and out and Shakespeare in and out.'

How many of those qualifications were possessed by Mr. J. M. Dent I do not know, but I should hesitate to affirm that, with the exception of a capacity for hard work and of knowing something about art and a good deal about human nature, Lane could have boasted that he commanded any one of them. But he had something which stood him in even better stead; he had, in an intense degree, that gift which we can all recognise and none of us define, he had personality, and personality, if not synonymous with genius, is at any rate closely akin to it.

Whether or not, then, Lane would have succeeded in these days is open to question. If the present conditions of the publishing trade are accurately described in the following extract from a book-trade paper of February, 1935, it is doubtful whether he would have much cared to be a publisher at all.

'I believe', says the writer of the remarks referred to, 'that commercial competition amongst publishers is leading to an increasing degradation of everything for which the bookseller stands. Books are becoming a commodity of no more sociological value to the community than chocolates or newspapers. They are the amusement of the passing moment. To the masses they convey neither ideas nor ideals nor any kind of æsthetic quality. And the firms who succeed and grow to monstrous prosperity are just those whose god is quantity.'

If that is at all a fair account of the state of things in the publishing trade at the present time, then John

A PUBLISHER OF QUALITY

Lane, with his taste and his ambition to publish only what was rare and distinguished, would have proved a hopeless anachronism.

I do not wish it to be inferred that Lane was so modest and retiring as to disdain the uses of advertisement. But what he would have disdained, had he been alive to-day, would have been to batter a way through for a book by mere clamour, by shouting louder, that is to say, by advertising in blacker and bigger type, than his competitors. His first question was not then, and would not have been to-day, 'Will it sell?' Someone once asked Pinero which, of all the plays he had written, was the one he liked best. 'The one I like best?' exclaimed Pinero. 'Why, the one that brought in the most money, of course!' To do him justice, that was not Lane's attitude. I think nothing gave him more satisfaction than that he had published the works of the gifted lady who chose to veil her identity under the pseudonym of Vernon Lee. There were also two books by another pseudonymous author, *Apologia Diffidentis* and *Sirenica*, by 'Compton Leith', which he was very proud of introducing to the public. Yet for none of these could he have expected that public to be a wide one.

But if, to begin with, Lane himself had none or few of the qualifications enumerated by Mr. J. M. Dent, he managed to gather about him and to enlist the services of those who were in a position to supply his deficiencies. When he began, he knew little or nothing about the practical side of book production. That knowledge, which Lane quickly acquired, was at first supplied by Mr. Walter Blaikie, of the firm of T. and A. Constable of Edinburgh, whose colophon will, I think, be found at the end of most of the early books published by Mathews and Lane. To Walter Blaikie, then, is due



JOHN LANE.



## UNCUT EDGES

at least some measure of that reputation for taste and elegance which first brought the productions of *The Bodley Head* into prominence. But soon typography and book production had few secrets for John Lane. In these as in other things he brought his native taste to bear. Here, for example, is a letter he wrote to the *Morning Post* which exhibits him as an *arbiter elegantiarum* in matters of typography and book production. A. C. Benson had apparently denounced uncut pages in the columns of the newspaper referred to. Lane takes up the cudgels in their defence in the following letter. The reader will not fail to observe how Lane seizes the occasion to work in obliquely and, as it were, by the way, an advertisement of one of his recent publications. That is typical of Lane. He never lost an opportunity—indeed he most ingeniously created them—of slipping in a subtle but seemingly innocent advertisement of his wares. Here is the letter:

‘I have read with great interest but some surprise the entertaining letter from Mr. A. C. Benson. We all know that Mr. Benson was born with much reverence, much poetry and great art instincts in his soul, and so far as I am aware his letter is the only evidence of anything lacking in his many gifts.

‘It will come as a shock to his admirers to know that he does not revere or appreciate the beauty and poetry of an uncut and untrimmed page. I had imagined Mr. Benson revelling in a Caxton, with its ample margins and its ragged edges. Depend upon it, the early fathers of the art and mystery of printing knew what they were doing. Indeed, the imposition and display of the type of every page of a “Fifteener” I have ever seen, when it has not been maltreated by the ruthless binder with his infernal cutting machine, is a symmetrical work

## A PRACTICAL ADVANTAGE

of art; and perhaps printing was the only art which was final in its conception.

'Possibly I have spoken enough of the poetical and artistic side of the subject. I will now turn to its practical side. Only on Wednesday last I happened to be in a bookseller's shop when a gentleman came in and asked to look at a copy of Mr. Christopher Turnor's recent work, *Land Problems and National Welfare*. But the bookseller had not the work in stock, and after the inquirer had gone I said to the bookseller: "Send to the Bodley Head for a copy, and submit it for approval." The bookseller replied by saying: "If I were to do that, he would sit down and read the book and return it." He evidently knew his man. It happens, however, that this particular book is uncut, so at most he could only have read half of it. There is a growing disposition on the part of publishers to send out their books to the booksellers on approval. It is therefore all the more necessary to guard against the abuse of such a privilege, and this as much in the interest of the bookseller as of the author and the publisher. There is also another practical reason, for I assume that Mr. Benson does not spend much of his time in reading novels, so it is only fair to surmise that the serious, or work books, would have to be bound, sooner or later, in calf or morocco. Thus, if the book were cut in its cloth form, its edges in all probability would again be plowed by the cutting machine, and thus the page which was once a thing of beauty would be shorn of all symmetry. Personally I love to cut my own pages, but I own that I have sometimes suffered torture when I have seen a lady, otherwise fair, prostitute her hairpin by ripping up the virginal pages of her book. Indeed, to me it is a joy to cut the pages for a friend, and I consider that I am unusually well

## LANE ON THE ROAD

armed when I do this, for I am the fortunate possessor of a paper knife, on which is inscribed: "To J. L., from A. C. B., August 13, 1898." In my literary browsings I am always accompanied by this token from Mr. Benson, and before this letter can be in type I shall be on my way to North Africa, accompanied, of course, by Mr. Benson's gift. In future I am afraid that the paper knife will have a double meaning for me, as it is only now that I have discovered the gentle satire of the gift.'

In the early days, both Mathews and Lane did their own travelling. Later on Chapman occasionally took on that part of the business. But of the three, Lane was unquestionably the star. To his prowess in this direction the following letter I have had from one of his former representatives, Mr. Arthur A. Cole—now the managing director of the well-known Ancient House Library at Reigate—sufficiently bears witness:

'I did not come into contact with John Lane until well into the new Century, but at that time I saw a great deal of him at Brighton, spending many an evening with him at his house at Kemp Town, when we (or rather he) would talk of many things,—of an Old Master he had discovered and acquired at a bargain price,—of a rare book he had picked up in his beloved West Country,—or of the superlative merits of a new book by a new author which was in the offing. How John Lane *did* like to visit booksellers throughout the country, and on his return, how much did he enjoy telling of big orders he had obtained from such booksellers to whom he had enthused over some special book. The bookseller could not fail to catch his enthusiasm even though he may (as he sometimes did) regret his big purchase afterwards. How well I remember calling upon a bookseller after some such visit by "the chief" and being led by the

## A VIEW FROM PENZANCE

bookseller to a table or counter on which were displayed a huge pile of one special book with *The Bodley Head* imprint, and being asked by the bookseller "what were we going to do about it"—with the result, of course, that the bookseller was relieved of surplus copies, only to order lavishly again on the Chief's next visit. But it was a real pleasure to work for John Lane, to be ever so humbly associated with him in the profession of Books. Before the days of Book Societies, when no Newspapers or bodies of people had the colossal effrontery to tell the reading public which was the best book of the month and to determine for the bookseller which should be his best-seller, John Lane published many a best-seller without such adventitious aid, and that cheery and sincere word of congratulation that John Lane always gave to his representative for honest effort was reward indeed.'

*Heureux qui, comme Ulysse, a fait un beau voyage!* If that is true, John Lane was frequently happy, and never so happy as when he was travelling in the West Country. 'I think', writes Mr. J. A. D. Bridger, the famous book-and print-seller of Penzance, 'John Lane always took the West Country journey off his traveller's hands, and a very leisurely trip he must have made of it. An early stop with the Prideaux-Brunes of Place House, Padstow, then by slow degrees he used to work down the country, staying with his many friends *en route*. He would stop at Hayle to see Dr. Harry Roberts, who at that time was editing his 'Garden Handbooks', and also 'The Country Handbooks'; the late Mr. Vivian of Hayle was another friend, and so on to Penzance. Here he always stayed at the Queen's Hotel. I usually had dinner with him one evening and he would come to my place to tea and discuss his and other publishers' books.'

## BARTERED BOOKS

on Cornwall, and admire my collection of original drawings by Rowlandson.

'Early this year', Mr. Bridger's letter continues, 'I had to go to St. Ives to see some books belonging to an old member of the Artist Colony there. It was there I found a collection of Lane's books, the history of which is rather curious. John Lane very much admired a picture by this artist, who, unfortunately, also regarded it as one of his best, and the price was a high one. After some bargaining the following agreement was come to: John Lane was to pay half the original price for the picture and send the artist a copy of every book he had published to date that he had a copy of; and if the book was issued in a limited edition, he was to have a copy of this edition. This is the history of the collection of Lane's books that I have.'

Someone, I read the other day, divides mankind into extra-verts and intro-verts. The words are not beautiful, but they are self-explanatory. John Lane, I think, was unquestionably an extra-vert. His world was outside him, objective. But then he had taste, a natural taste, brought to something like perfection by time and experience, so that what in others not so endowed expresses itself in mere vulgarity, mere display, was sublimated in John Lane into a passion for gathering about himself things of beauty, particularly where they possessed associations of historical or antiquarian interest.

But there was another thing he loved besides *objets d'art*, and that was society, congenial society. With

## A VISIT TO TONACOMBE

Lane, to be alone was to be dull. He was the last person in the world of whom it could be said—

‘Nunquam minus solus quam cum solus’.

He liked society, he was an inveterate diner-out. He was *un curieux* and he had a fund of good stories, and by good, I mean, not only amusing but interesting and informative stories. He was indeed a sort of walking ‘Notes and Queries’ and possessed an extraordinary knowledge of out-of-the-way facts about houses and great families, their treasures, their muniments and particularly their pictures. I once went with him to Tonacombe—it was, I think, the last time we were in the West Country together—and he gave me beforehand a detailed and accurate description of many of the things I should see there. Tonacombe, it will be remembered by readers of *Westward Ho!* was the original of ‘Chapel’, the home of Eustace Leigh: ‘a great rambling dark house on the Atlantic cliffs, in Moorwenstow parish, not far from Sir Richard Grenville’s house of Stow . . . a dozen conspiracies might have been hatched there without anybody hearing of it; and Jesuits and seminary priests skulked in and out all the year round, unquestioned though unblest.’

Lane has been called an *arriviste*, even a tuft-hunter, and a tuft-hunter perhaps he was. But, then, who is not? According to Thackeray, that man does not exist who would not like to be seen walking along Pall Mall arm-in-arm with a Duke. But if Lane was a tuft-hunter he was discriminating in his tufts. They had to be united with brains or, especially in his later years, with pictures. A mere industrial peer would hardly have aroused his hunter’s instinct.

Then again it must be borne in mind that when

## LITERARY AGENTS

Lane entered the field as a publisher, the middleman, the literary agent, had not yet made his appearance. The great fixed stars in the publishing firmament, Macmillans, Longmans, John Murray, Blackwoods, Smith Elder, had each a sort of magnetic or gravitational attraction and drew all the clients they needed into their respective orbits. But a new-comer had to fend for himself, had to make himself known, had to go forth into the world conquering and to conquer. He *had* to push his way, or go under. Money would not have done it then. It would not have done for Messrs. Elkin Mathews and John Lane to have said to this or that writer of eminence, 'I will publish your book and pay you so much.' The answer would have been, 'Macmillans we know, and Longmans we know; but who are ye?'

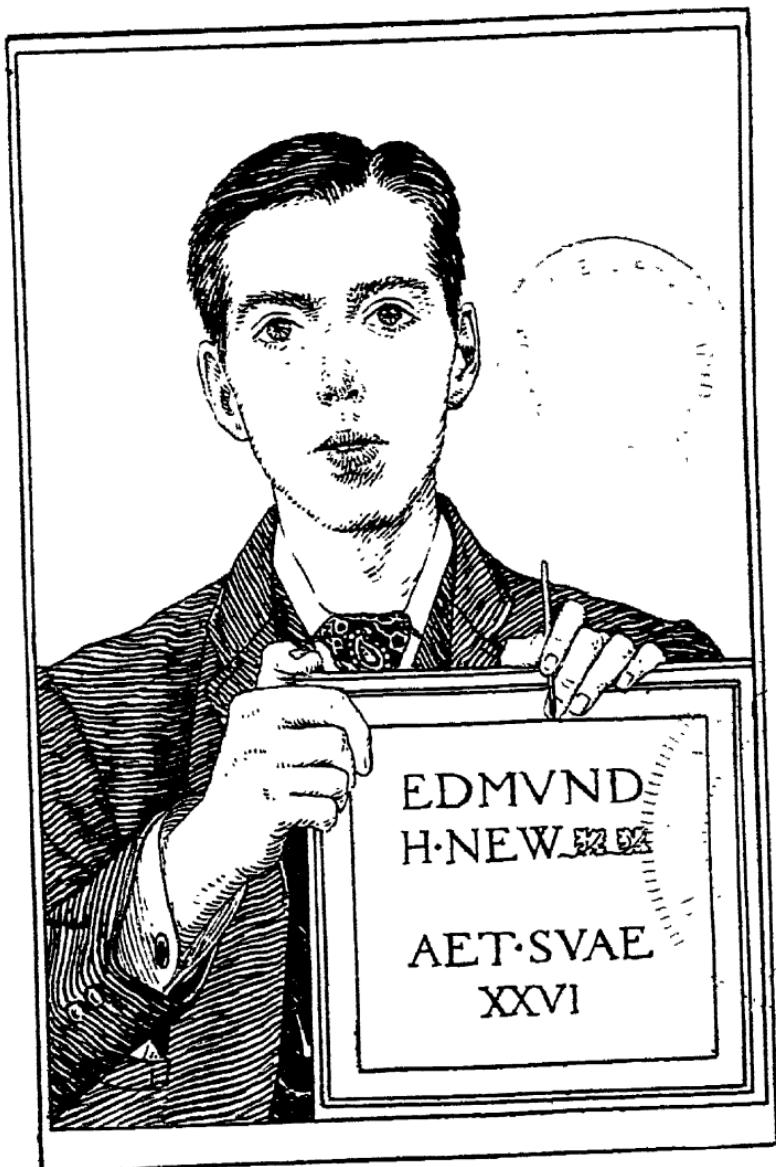
John Lane then had to go out into the world, the world of fashion, art and letters. That was his business. It was also, as I said, his pleasure. I think that, though in the end he was forced to accept their 'services', Lane could never 'abide' literary agents. His detractors of course will say significantly 'and for a very good reason'. But I knew Lane very thoroughly and I am certain that what he disliked was the elimination of the personal contact between author and publisher. His authors were his friends, some few may have become his enemies, but even that was better, from his point of view, than dealing with mere abstractions.

The tea-parties which he used to give before his marriage, became famous, and on those occasions his rooms at No. 41 Albany were thronged with literary and artistic notabilities, among whom the little man with the trim pointed beard and smiling face would move about saying a tactful word to everyone, keeping

## A MEMORABLE 'SMOKER'

the whole motley company in good tune, for Lane was the very embodiment of tact, though sometimes it must be confessed even his resources were not enough. One day he was closeted with a certain poet—not the least eminent of those whose names were associated with *The Bodley Head*. Suddenly one of the voices—it was not Lane's—became loud, and continued to grow louder. Evidently the speaker was in an ungovernable passion. Then the climax came. There was a crash, as though some article of furniture had been flung with violence against the wall. Those in the outer office looked at each other 'with a wild surmise'. The door opened and the poet strode out, his face flushed with anger, his eyes in a fine frenzy rolling. 'This' said Lane wistfully, as he gathered up the fragments of a little occasional table that the poet in his rage had hurled across the room, '—this is one of the sacrifices that mediocrity must needs make to genius.'

*The Bodley Head*—or No. 41 Albany—was always a hive of industry. It was also the scene of many festivities. Indeed it began with one, a memorable smoking party. The names of the guests are on record. These are some—and only some—of them: Henry James, Henry Harland, Aubrey Beardsley, Edmund Gosse, Lewis Hind, Wilfrid Meynell, St. Loe Strachey, Owen Seaman, E. J. Sullivan, John Davidson, Richard Le Gallienne, Norman Gale, William Watson, Alfred East, J. T. Nettleship, John Swann, Kenneth Grahame, Onslow Ford, Charles Robinson, Walter Crane, Lionel Johnson, Selwyn Image, Arthur Symons, Ernest Dowson, Wilfrid Ball, Wilson Steer, Dr. Todhunter, Professor Sylvanus Thompson, Robert Ross, Dr. Scanes Spicer, Dr. Richard Garnett, Cosmo Monkhouse, Raymond Maude, Cyril Maude, Sir Nevill Geary, Lord de Tabley,



EDMUND H. NEW: A SELF PORTRAIT



EDMUND NEW AT NO. GI

Clement Shorter, Arthur Thomson, Douglas Sladen, Sir Henry Norman, William Stone, Frederic Chapman, Arthur Machen, James Welch, H. G. Wells, Walter Sickert, William Rothenstein, R. C. Lehmann, Marriott Watson, besides the President and most of the Sette of Odd Volumes.

Clearly Johnny Lane had travelled a long way since that autumn morning when they fetched him from the harvest-field at his Uncle Richard's farm to take him up to the Railway Clearing House. If Johnny Lane hunted talent and genius, he did it well. He caught them!

In the summer of 1895, E. H. New, the famous black-and-white artist who illustrated the classic editions of White's *Selborne* and Walton's *Compleat Angler*, appears to have been staying with Lane at No. Gi. It was New who drew the picture of the Bodley Head which used to adorn the firm's catalogues, and this task was the occasion of his visit. The late Harry Furniss, in his *Paradise in Piccadilly* (a history of Albany), quotes the following extract from New's Diary:

'1895: 24 July, Wednesday

Dined with Lane and William Watson.

Anning Bell and Crane came in about 10.30 (to the Bodley Head) and left about 1.0. Looking at my Derbyshire drawings for Walton.'

'25th, Thursday

Introduced to R. Watson Gilder, editor of *Century Magazine*.

Began again drawing front of "Bodley Head" from opposite side of Vigo Street, for Catalogue cover. . . . Tea at 5.0 in Lane's room. Met "Mrs. Devereux" again, Wilfrid Ball, James Welch, who told us of the

## THE LEACOCK TEA

fall of Le Gallienne's mulberry tree at Brentford, Arthur Symons, Dr. and Mrs. . . . (very beautiful), Cunningham-Graham, Pauline Johnson, "Teka-Lionwake", the Canadian-Indian poet, Miss Gertrude Prideaux-Brune, etc. Dined with Lane and William Watson at the "Cheshire Cheese", . . . and then had a lovely walk along the Embankment to Watson's rooms at Westminster, under the Abbey.

'26th

Beardsley to breakfast: brought wonderful design of Venus (proof), T. C. Gotch—very pleasant man. Professor Sylvanus Thompson (delightful person), Mr. Millard, of publishing firm of Chicago, and Laurence Housman, dined at the Hogarth Club with us. George Moore, Greiffenhagen, Bell, Professor Raleigh, and H. G. Wells (it was their first meeting) returned with others for smoke and talk. Miss Netta Syrett (Grant Allen's niece) in to tea. At Bodley Head drawing all day. . . . Captain Dunne took me to Fly Fishers' Club to see book on Fishes, for "Walton". Couldn't sleep, either of us, so we

(27th) came down at 1.0 and I went on with drawing for cover of Catalogue until 2.0, and finished it before breakfast next day.

Lane off at 11.0 to Wilfrid Ball's wedding. Watson in.'

One tea-party, more brilliant than the rest, was held on June 20th, 1914, in honour of Stephen Leacock, the invitation card for which was designed by 'Fish'.

After his marriage, Lane naturally entertained chiefly at his house No. 8 Lancaster Gate Terrace, and Mrs. Lane's Sunday afternoons were one of the 'features' of

## ARUNDEL DENE

literary London. But I for one missed, in these more formal gatherings, the unconstrained, bohemian atmosphere of the old parties at *The Bodley Head*.

Apparently Lane with his Tea Parties set a fashion which other publishers followed, for in an editorial note to the August, 1913, number of *The Bodleian* I read the following: 'Much is being written about the "Publishers' Teas". Mr. Lane, of course, originated the idea, which dates back to the time when all the young poets were searching the Burlington Arcade for *The Bodley Head*. These earlier teas' the writer, who was no doubt the charming and witty Arundel Dene (every Devon man knows of the Denes of Horwood), goes on to say, 'these earlier teas of the Devonshire Mæcenas were once commemorated in most amusing verse.' Dene was alluding to these lines which appeared in the *Westminster Gazette* and which, since they contain one or two rather shrewd references to Lane, it is worth while to quote in full. 'Sir Thomas' (i.e. Sir Thomas Bodley) is of course John Lane.

### I

'There's a street that men call Vigo,  
Whither scribblers such as I go;  
With a badly written story  
On the grab for gold and glory;  
With a ballad or a sonnet  
("Novice" plainly writ upon it)  
Or a sketch that isn't finished  
(Yet its worth seems undiminished).  
Painters, poets, artists many,  
Full of genius, ne'er a penny—  
Down the street that men call Vigo  
All the hearts that hold a sigh go.

II

There's a sign we know as Bodley  
Whither wander folk ungodly;  
All the writers, all the scribblers,  
All the critics, all the quibblers,  
Smoking pipes and drinking whisky,  
Telling tales of matter risky—  
"This is business, this is commerce,"  
Thinks their doughty host, Sir Thomas—  
Steers with skill the conversation  
Till to *him* it hath relation.  
(An it please you, he's the fellow)  
Owns a certain Book that's Yellow—  
'Neath the sign we know as Bodley  
Business greeteth friendship oddly.

III

There's a room in Number G 1  
Where this publisher can see one;  
Femininity invades it,  
Scent of many flowers pervades it:  
Here are violets—and a sonnet  
(Writer wears a witching bonnet);  
Here's a novel—and a lily  
(One is pure—the other silly);  
Here's a drawing wrapped in roses  
(Its creator yonder poses):  
'Tis a matter most astounding—  
All these geniuses abounding;  
Over tea and bread and butter  
Many compliments they utter.

## GEESE AND SWANS

“This is pleasure, though it’s commerce”  
    Chuckles wicked old Sir Thomas,  
Ah! that jolly room in G  
    Is the place he loves to see one!”

Among the earlier publications of *The Bodley Head* was an edition of the letters of Thomas Lovell Beddoes edited by Edmund Gosse. By an unfortunate misprint, this volume was announced in one of the papers in which it was advertised, as ‘The Letters of Thomas Lovell Beddoes, edited by Edmund *Goose*.’ Thereupon Canon Ainger delivered himself of the following, and posted it to Gosse:

Heed not this last *bêtise*  
    Of John’s;  
We know that all his geese  
    Are swans.

There was a good deal of truth in that. It is indeed a fact that all Lane’s ‘geese were swans’. If he got hold of a new poet, or a new essayist, he extolled him to the skies. And he believed nine-tenths of what he said. Sometimes even ten-tenths. And somehow or other he managed to get all London talking about his books. It did not much matter whether they were praised, or blamed, so long as they were talked about. No means for enlarging his market were ever neglected by Lane. Whether it was a case of selling thousands of copies to the great circulating libraries, or to the great distributing firms; or whether it was a matter of planting one or two on some little drapery-cum-stationery shop in an out-of-the-way village in Devon or Cornwall,

### 'GOLDEN LANE'

he would take the same amount of trouble in each case. He would employ the same art, the same keenness, whether he were trying to land a sprat or a mackerel. All were fish that came to his net. Nothing was too big; nothing too small. Even his reverses and misfortunes he would turn to account. If a fire occurred at his premises he would, after the manner of Caleb Balderstone, give the public a list of all the good things which, owing to this disaster, they would temporarily have to do without, but which they would have an opportunity of acquiring as soon as the damage was made good.

Once, on his way to Euston to catch the American boat-train, he rushed into *The Bodley Head* to find that the place had been broken into during the night. No sooner had he landed in New York, than he dashed off a letter to the press about the calamity which had befallen him. The letter was addressed to the *New York Times* and ran as follows:

'Saturday morning, April 6, on my way from my house to Euston to take the transatlantic train, I called at my office, *The Bodley Head*, Vigo Street, London, where, to my surprise, I found a Police Inspector, two detectives, and my usually cool staff in a very excited state. I soon discovered the reason of the presence of the majesty of the law, for my publishing office had been burgled.

'Vigo Street has long been known as a centre for Golden Thoughts and Silver Plate. Perhaps I should state that all the shops in the street but four are either goldsmiths, silversmiths, or publishers, hence it has sometimes been called Golden Lane.

'This seems to be the first time that burglars have

## THE BURGLAR'S PREDILECTIONS

taken to active literary pursuits and preferred Golden Thoughts rather than Silver Plate. It must be acknowledged that recently these gentlemen have displayed a commendable interest in art, but this is probably the first occasion that their attention has been seriously turned to literature. I feel, however, that the result of their enterprise will not be so easily converted into that modern trinity, *£ s. d.*, as if they had turned their friendly attention to my neighbours' silver, which I can so highly recommend.

'It is interesting to study the tastes of my new clientèle, which I am now able to do from my stock clerk's inventory. As might be expected, all the stock of *The Golden Age* and *The Quest of the Golden Girl* had disappeared. We also found that the bin in which *The Champagne Standard* is kept had been drained. As for *A Boy's Marriage*, that had been left intact. It did not probably prove to the taste of this moral critic. Oddly enough, a set of proof sheets of a detective story by Mr. A. C. Fox-Davies, entitled *The Finances of Sir John Kynnersley*, had been taken. This threatens to become a public danger, as the author at great pains elaborates many ingenious schemes for fraudulently obtaining large sums of money, for which reason the police and the public at large are urged to be on their guard.

'This new force in literature seems to be greatly interested in Napoleon, as several copies of *Napoleon's Conquest of Prussia* and *Napoleon's Conquest of Poland*, together with *The Boyhood and Youth of Napoleon* and *The Fall of Napoleon*, have enriched the collections of my unknown patrons. This latest literary movement does not display any great interest in the "New Theology", as both *The Creed of Christ* and Mr. Chester-

## A STROKE OF GENIUS

ton's *Heretics* were untouched. Perhaps Bodley Head theology is not quite orthodox enough for these new searchers after truth. On the other hand, not a single copy of *The Beloved Vagabond* remains. This Mr. Locke, the author, should regard not only as a touching but as an active tribute to him from a kindred spirit of his own vagabond.

'One literary coincidence it is interesting to note, and that is the burglars seemed to entirely agree with the criticisms in the London *Times* of M. P. Willcocks's *The Wingless Victory*, where it stated that "Such books are worth keeping on the shelves even by the classics", for not a single copy is missing. There is no trace of any of these new collectors having a book plate, but there is abundant proof that they had book marks, for their thumb and finger prints have been photographed at Scotland Yard. The moral, it would seem, for authors who desire to have a wide circulation among burglars, at any rate, is always to select titles with either a metallic or a liquid sound.

'JOHN LANE.'

*The Bodley Head,*  
New York,  
April 19, 1907.

The selection of a sign and a name for his business—such a sign and such a name—was a stroke of advertising genius. It struck precisely the right note. It caught on with a vengeance. 'The very intonation', says Sir John Squire, 'which he (Lane) gave to the words "Bodley Head" when he spoke them in conversation, betrayed an honest pride, not only in the success of the

## AN EARLY ARRIVAL

business which he had built up, but in its quality. So famous had *The Bodley Head* become, that even its founder spoke of it with awe and admiration.'

The name captured the popular imagination. It had as familiar a sound about it as Drury Lane, say, or the Royal Academy.

*The Bodley Head* in Albany was more like a club than a place of business. It was a sodality, a confraternity of which Lane was the abbot. Its members were, to speak figuratively, dwellers within the same tent—contubernales—and often enough feasters at the same board. And in no figurative sense, for it was not uncommon for some of the more intimate of the brethren to write to Lane and ask for a night's lodging. And, provided there was a vacant room, no one was ever turned away. Here is an example: 'I find to my horror that my uncle's health has seen fit to drive him this week to Tunbridge Wells and the house is closed. I should be extremely obliged if you would put me up for Thursday and Friday nights. It is necessary for me to eat two dinners this week at the Temple, otherwise I should not trouble you. . . . I shall come up on Wednesday night by the night train and am afraid I shall turn up rather early—about 8 o'clock on Thursday morning. But do not put yourself about for me, as I can get breakfast at the station.' The writer of that letter is now the Governor-General of Canada. Some of John Buchan's earlier work was published by John Lane, and for a considerable period he was one of the official readers to *The Bodley Head*.

There were offshoots, or colonies of the original home, such as the Hogarth Club in Dover Street, and the old Café Royal hard by in Regent Street. These one has to be pretty well on in years to remember.

## THE COMPLETE ENGLISHMAN

Not that I saw much of the Café Royal, or took part in the 'raffish', Bohemian, man-about-town sort of life that went on within its gilded portals. I was too innocent for that absinthe-drinking society, and my purse too slender. Poverty is a great ally to a young man's guardian angel.

Lane stood almost *in loco parentis* to his authors and artists. Nowadays, publishers give cocktail parties in their palatial offices, or receptions at some fashionable hotel. But these are grand, premeditated, formal affairs, compared with the fortuitous gatherings that used to 'occur' rather than to be arranged in John Lane's day. His people were like bees. You could never tell when, or where, they were going to swarm.

Lane has had his detractors, as he has had his panegyrists, yet no one, not even his severest critic, would deny that, somehow or another, he was at the centre of the constellation of the Nineties. John Lane, in fact, was so indispensable that, if he had not existed, it would have been necessary to invent him. He was intensely English, in nothing more so than in his delight in having an escapade in Paris. He was intensely English, and the atmosphere that prevailed at *The Bodley Head* was entirely different from that which one encountered, for example, at Mr. William Heinemann's, which was cosmopolitan. Mr. Heinemann was an extremely able publisher. Nevertheless, it is not of Heinemann, but of Lane, you think at the mere mention of the Nineties. Mr. Holbrook Jackson, in his able and exhaustive study *The Eighteen-Nineties* says: 'Mr. William Heinemann was a notable publisher of the period and in sympathy with the younger generation; so was Mr. Fisher Unwin, who showed his modernism by advertising his books by means of posters designed by Aubrey



INVITATION CARD DESIGNED BY BEARDSLEY FOR A SMOKING  
PARTY AT THE BODLEY HEAD



Beardsley; and Mr. Grant Richards issued several important works of the time, notably Bernard Shaw's *Plays Pleasant and Unpleasant*, and A. E. Housman's *A Shropshire Lad*. The lists of any of these publishers issued during the decade prove interesting reading even to-day. . . . No one will deny, however, that *The Bodley Head* was the chief home of the new movement, for not only did *The Yellow Book* issue from that house, but books by Oscar Wilde, John Davidson, Francis Thompson, Max Beerbohm, Richard Le Gallienne, George Egerton, Laurence Binyon, Michael Field, Norman Gale, Kenneth Grahame, Lionel Johnson, Alice Meynell, William Watson, and G. S. Street.'

If Lane and Heinemann were rivals, they were friendly rivals. One day, in the autumn of 1895, just after Lane had severed his partnership with Mathews, Heinemann dropped in for a chat at *The Bodley Head*. It happened to be a Friday, and Lane had seen Heinemann's Autumn List that day in *The Athenaeum*. Lane congratulated him, but said, 'Heinemann, there is one book in your list which ought to have come to me, and I feel rather resentful at seeing it among *your* books.' With the slight stutter which was characteristic of him when excited, Heinemann exclaimed: 'M-m-m-m-my dear Lane, I am very sorry. W-w-w-which book is it?' '*The First Step*, by William Heinemann, of course,' answered Lane. 'Oh', said Heinemann with becoming modesty, '*you* would not have taken it.' 'Of course I would,' said Lane. Next day Heinemann came round and asked if Lane really meant what he said. Lane reminded him that he was a serious publisher and said he would have taken his book with pleasure. Whereupon Heinemann transferred his book to Lane's list, and Lane it was who published his other two plays—

## EPITHALAMIUM

*Summer Moths* and *War*. 'I have known him', said Lane, when he heard of his sudden death, 'since 1893, as a publisher, an author, and a friend. In each capacity I have nothing but admiration for him.'

Lane and *The Bodley Head* were household names on both sides of the Atlantic. In the early part of 1902, fashionable America was startled by the announcement of the secret marriage of a Miss Lena Head, the eighteen-year-old heiress to a vast fortune, to a Frederick William Bodley. Bodley was a young Englishman employed as superintendent of the estate owned by the bride's guardian, whose fortune she was to inherit. This event was made the occasion of some rhymes, entitled 'The Bodley Head', which filled a column of *The Tatler*. Their author was Mr. Mostyn T. Piggott, and the following are three of the verses:

'Oh, let the printing presses roar!  
Oh, waft the wondrous tidings round!  
At last the patient Quest is o'er,  
At last the Golden Girl is found.  
Behold the parson, meek and godly,  
Handing the long-lacked Head to Bodley!

Bound in the holy bond the twain  
Appeal to every heart; but where,  
Oh, where we wonder was John Lane?  
He surely should have figured there.  
How much we should have joyed in finding  
Him sagely managing the binding!

One might conceivably have thought  
That this conclusion was foregone,

## TREMENDOUS ENERGY

That not in vain one would have sought  
The music of George Egerton;  
And yet throughout that celebration,  
No Keynotes thrilled the congregation.'

The allusion in the first stanza is to *The Quest of the Golden Girl*, by Richard Le Gallienne.

What sort of a man was Lane to work for, or to work with?

I expect there would be a good many different opinions about that. I always found him charming. But then I stood in a privileged position. Nothing ill could come out of Devon, least of all out of our particular corner of it. Then, again, I had known him all my life. He was kind and indulgent to me and there is no denying I was very fond of him and I missed him greatly when he died. Chapman had a great regard for him, an affectionate regard, but I have heard him say some stiff things about Lane and the amount of work he expected from his staff.

In the first place it must be borne in mind that *The Bodley Head* was Lane's divinity, and he never spared himself in its service. Long and irregular hours were nothing to him if there was anything special afoot, and there usually was. He was tremendously energetic; the volume and variety of his correspondence bear witness to that. But then his business, with its co-related activities of collecting, was his pastime. He knew no other. He took up golf for a time; but he made a poor show of it. There were, of course, his social distractions. He was very fond of society, and

## DR. WILLIAMSON REMEMBERS

particularly women's society, and he was a great dinner-out. I don't think he missed many gatherings of the *Sette of Odd Volumes* or of the *Timmarsh Club*. But whatever the place and whatever the occasion, he always had his eyes and ears open for anything that would further the interests, or enhance the reputation, of *The Bodley Head*.

Some interesting details concerning Lane's connexion with the *Sette of Odd Volumes* have been communicated to me by Dr. G. C. Williamson, one of its oldest members, and himself a distinguished antiquary and writer upon art.

'Mr. John Lane', says Dr. Williamson, 'was for many years a member of the *Sette of Odd Volumes*, and a very popular member. He was a guest in 1887, and was elected a member in 1888, at the same time as Mr. Alexander Hollingsworth, which was during the Presidentship of Brother Venables, who was "Antiquary" to the *Sette*. Lane took the name of "Bibliographer", and he continued to be a member of the *Sette* until his death.

'He was a generous helper to the *Sette*, to which he presented four of the *Opuscula*, printing and distributing them at his own cost. The first one he produced was No. 36, "An Essay upon Essays", which was written by Brother Todhunter, the "Playwright" to the *Sette*. Lane produced an edition of 350 copies, and distributed them at the February meeting in 1896.

'Another paper, also written by Brother Todhunter, and delivered on the 31st of May, 1904, was called "An Essay in Search of a Subject" (No. 50); of this Lane produced 199 copies, which he presented to the *Sette* on the 25th of October, 1904.

'In 1908, Brother Lidgey, "Gleeman" and Secretary

## A GOOD COMPANION

to the *Sette*, wrote an interesting paper on "Richard Wagner and *Der Ring des Nibelungen*" (No. 58), and of this Lane produced and presented 249 copies to the *Sette*, on the 26th of May, 1908.

"Finally, he bore all the cost of producing Brother Keel's *Opusculum*, "Music in the Time of Queen Elizabeth" (No. 68), read before the *Sette* on the 24th of February, 1914. Of this 249 copies were presented by Brother Lane, and distributed on the 26th of May of the same year.

"The *Sette* therefore owes to his munificence four of its important publications.

"He was a very constant attendant at its meetings, and introduced a large number of guests. He was the subject of a great deal of chaff. As soon as an author was introduced by him after dinner, cries of "Who's his publisher?" went round the table, but Lane took it all in very happy fashion, and, far from resenting the chaff that was unmercifully poured out upon his head, he appeared to rejoice in it. They were not all authors whom he brought to the *Sette*; there were other notable people, but his friends invariably believed that he had literary productions in view from anyone he introduced. When Mrs. Lane came to the Ladies' Nights, there were redoubled cries from the Brothers when he announced that he had brought Mrs. Lane with him, and that she had recently written some very clever books.

"There was a certain dry humour about the man that attracted the attention of his companions, and I think I may say, as one of the oldest members of the *Sette*, that we were always glad to see him. There was a quality about him that made him a good companion and a popular one. His humour often disarmed well-merited criticism.

## A DEFINITION OF GENIUS

'He was reluctant to take office, pleading that he had too much to do. The members would have been glad to see him in the Chair, but the only offices he ever filled were those of Secretary, and Master of the Ceremonies; the former in 1890, the latter in 1891.'

It is important to realise that for Lane life was all work and no play. Or perhaps it would be better to say that his work was his play; that he was one of those happy and rare individuals for whom work and recreation are synonymous. According to the Warden of New College, that is a definition of genius. 'Men and women of genius', says Mr. Fisher, 'are in a special category. The problem of leisure does not arise for them, their work is play, their play is work.' If that be so, then Lane was unquestionably a genius. Or at least he became one when he left the Railway Clearing House. For there is work, and work. Lane's was always so varied that it never irked him. Evidently the monotony of routine duties, the 'sad mechanic exercise' of office work, the sombre tyranny of the desk, would have fretted his restless spirit and made a dullard of him. The obituary notice of him in the Railway Clearing House Magazine, with a candour unusual in obituary notices, said, 'he was not very brilliant at our complicated work'. He did not write what is called a good clerical hand; I think he went out of his way *not* to do that. And I do not think he had much of a head for figures. He had little taste for detail, and, for the purely executive part of his business, he came to rely more and more on his manager and his senior staff. Of Chapman, his first manager, I have already spoken. He had an immense knowledge of books and he had the true scholar's mind. There was nothing careless or slapdash about him, yet he was a very rapid

## HERBERT JENKINS

worker. For his opinions, Lane had a very healthy respect. With the arrival of Herbert Jenkins, Chapman's rôle became more and more restricted to that of literary adviser. Jenkins was essentially a man of action. He was extremely able, and as energetic as Lane himself. But, with Jenkins, work was very decidedly work, and play, play; at least that was so when he was working for Lane. When he was working for himself, it may have been different. He had a strong will of his own and a marked dislike to being treated as a mere employee. Certainly the business prospered during his tenure of office; but the atmosphere soon began to grow strained. One day I happened to be calling on Jenkins with the proofs of a French translation I had been asked to report on. Lane suddenly burst into the room with some instructions for Jenkins, which he wanted to be carried out then and there. It was near lunch-time and Jenkins had an engagement for lunch—a party, in fact—and he jibbed. Lane insisted, and Jenkins—went to his luncheon party. I was not surprised to hear, soon afterwards, that Herbert Jenkins had left *The Bodley Head* to set up for himself. Arundel Dene used to act as a sort of Deputy-Manager. He also edited *The Bodleian*—the 'Journal of Books at the Bodley Head' to which he contributed some amusing editorials. He subsequently gave up publishing and settled in Australia. He served with distinction in the Great War.

There were from time to time other young men who came to Lane in the capacity, as it were, of articled clerks, to be initiated into the *arcana* of the publishing business. Only one of these is known to me; and he, luckily for the general public, never became a publisher. Not that Ben Travers would not have shone as a publisher.

He would shine at anything. He became a writer of humorous novels, which, in due course, were put upon the stage and *The Dippers* and *Rookery Nook* ushered in a whole series of triumphant farces that have set the country 'on a roar'. When war broke out, Travers promptly joined the Air Force, in which he bore himself with conspicuous coolness and gallantry, attaining the rank of Flight Lieutenant.

Lane chose his readers with great care, but he often defied their opinion and the event nearly always proved him right. I do not think he accepted any work for publication—if he did they were very few—until he had read a good deal of it, or at all events dipped into it himself. His knowledge of literature was neither wide nor deep, but he had an extraordinary 'nose', as they say, for a telling piece of work. Sir John Squire sums him up pretty accurately when he says, 'He was not the Utopian publisher who loses money he hasn't got on books that nobody wants; and he was not even a man of pronounced literary tastes, though an antiquary, a connoisseur, a *raconteur*, and one who displayed an infinite curiosity about human character.' It was indeed his knowledge of men and women, his knowledge of life, combined with a sure sense, an innate instinct for everything that was beautiful in its kind—all this, rather than his knowledge of literature, that won him so many successes. Not only did he read their books, or—when his eyes began to give him trouble—have them read to him, and make suggestions upon them, but he took a fatherly interest in his authors themselves. Here, for example, is a characteristic letter. It is written to Mr. Osbert Burdett, whose brilliant monograph, *The Beardsley Period*, was then about to be sent to the printers:

A CHARACTERISTIC LETTER

THE BODLEY HEAD,  
VIGO STREET,  
W.I.

*September 1, 1924.*

DEAR MR. BURDETT:

Last week the office sent me to Boars Hill your MS. complete, but as it is still impossible for me to read it I sent it for a final reading to ——, and as he was coming to Boars Hill yesterday in his car he brought it with him, but unfortunately on the road he was overtaken by a gale and part of the MS. and certainly the brown paper wrapper was blown out of the car; however, he gathered up all the sheets and it seems to me quite complete. I should however only be satisfied by your looking it through again as I think there were two or three pages which were not included in the pagination, but I certainly hope you will find everything correct; immediately you return it to the office, it will go to the printers.

The only serious suggestion he makes is that on the back of page 163, we do not think that to say that you were pressed would be fair to you, —— or myself. I feel sure you will accept the suggestion made by ——: he is greatly impressed by the book. I am convinced by one or two of the chapters that have been read to me that the volume will take its place as the most important piece of literary criticism that has been written for the last twenty-five years.

I came up with —— last night and spent half an hour at Thame with your old friends Mr. —— and Mr. Fothergill.

Yours sincerely,  
JOHN LANE.

## A CASE OF COPYRIGHT

THE PATH of the enterprising publisher is assuredly not an easy one. It is not, as some people imagine, enough to possess a keen literary taste nicely balanced with an instinct for what will pay. To be under the perpetual obligation of effecting a compromise between his artistic predilections and his commercial necessities is only one of the manifold trials that fall to a publisher's lot. The subjects with which a publisher must be familiar if he is to achieve success, or even avoid disaster, are as multifarious as they are complicated, and not least among them is a knowledge of the jurisprudence of his calling, particularly in the departments of libel and copyright. To the innocent and candid mind, the law of copyright with its various successive modifications presents as many difficulties as the theories of Dr. Einstein. For example, most people know that the copyright in a letter belongs to the writer of it. That being so, one might be forgiven for assuming that copyright in a speech should reside with the speaker of it. Not at all. The rashness of that very obvious inference is revealed by an adventure that befell John Lane in the year 1899.

In June of that year, there issued from *The Bodley Head* a most attractive and important book. It was entitled *Appreciations and Addresses* and consisted of

## DIGNITY AND CHARM

speeches made in a great diversity of circumstance and on a great variety of subjects, by the Earl of Rosebery. The themes ranged from a panegyric on Gladstone to the inauguration of a golf-club. But whatever their importance, national, international, or merely local, all were invested with that incomparable blend of dignity and charm which was one of their author's most distinctive characteristics. It was, then, an engaging book that was being offered to the public, one whose contents were thoroughly in accord with those elegant, belle-lettristic traditions which, for some considerable time now, had come to be associated with *The Bodley Head*. Only one person deprecated its publication and that was the author of the speeches himself, who modestly regarded them as too fleeting and transitory to deserve the separate and substantial character which collected publication would give them. Notwithstanding this objection, which does not appear to have been hotly insisted upon, the volume appeared in a binding of pale green appropriately embellished with primroses attired in their native yellow. The sales were proceeding merrily—at least one considerable edition had been exhausted—when there fell upon *The Bodley Head* a thunderbolt whose reverberations shook the publishing world to its foundations. Of the several sections which the book comprised, five had been taken, with virtually no modification, from the reports printed in *The Times* newspaper. The authorities of Printing House Square claimed the copyright of the speeches reported and published by them and applied for an injunction to restrain 'a publisher named Lane' from selling the book in which these speeches were included. The publisher named Lane was impatient of this restraint and the case in due course came up for trial. It was heard before Mr. Justice North, who,

## AN ABSURD JUDGMENT

after carefully weighing the arguments advanced by the eminent counsel on behalf of their respective clients, gave judgment for *The Times*. He ruled in fact that a reporter making his own report of a speech delivered in public and not copying someone else's report, was entitled to copyright in that report.

The case, which was rightly regarded as a test case, aroused widespread interest. Not only was the verdict commented upon, for the most part unfavourably, throughout the country, but Lane himself was the recipient of numerous letters sympathising with him in what their writers held to be a wholly undeserved misfortune. Lane was encouraged to appeal against what many people, and people of note, did not hesitate to proclaim 'an absurd judgment'.

The Publishers' Association obtained Counsel's opinion on Lane's behalf, for they felt that the interests of the whole body of publishers were involved and that the quarrel was just as much theirs as his.

In the meantime, Lane, thus encouraged, decided to appeal. His counsel were Mr. Augustine Birrell and Mr. Scruton. Mr. Birrell's statement of the case was witty and effective. In the speeches, he argued, whatever originality there was belonged to Lord Rosebery. The ideas, the humour, the quotations—all were his, and therefore, he submitted, it could not be said that the reporter could be the author, any more than it could be said that Milton's daughter was the author of the manuscript of *Paradise Lost*. The words of the speech, he contended, had been composed by Lord Rosebery with the intent of giving them to the world before *The Times* published them, and there was therefore no originality in the reporter's work and none of the independent labour or research which gave the protection of copy-

'ALL RIGHTS RESERVED'

right to directories, railway time-tables and Stock Exchange quotations. What a shocking thing it would be, Mr. Birrell remarked, if some great orator, arguing a national cause, or some preacher with his message to humanity, ended up with the words, 'All rights reserved.' Street directories, he said, were rightly copyright as being the result of 'independent labour and research' quite as much as that of the historian who searched the Anglo-Saxon chronicles, but a transcriber—that was a different matter. These arguments, and others less vivacious, but not less cogent, from Mr. Scrutton, were, together with those of the opposing counsel, unfolded at great length, in the Court of Appeal before the Master of the Rolls, the President of the Probate Division and Lord Justice Romer. The Master of the Rolls, in giving judgment, said that Lord Rosebery had no copyright in his speeches, although he could have obtained it if he had liked. There was no evidence that he transferred his right to acquire copyright to *The Times*. Mr. Justice North took the view that although a reporter had no copyright in the speech or address which he reported, he had a copyright in his verbatim report of the speech or address. The Master of the Rolls could not take that view. The reporter was not the author of the speech, therefore the Act gave him no right to copyright in that speech. The reporter was not the author of the matter reported, and to hold that every reporter of a speech had copyright in his own report would be to stretch the language of the Act of 1842 to an extent which it would not bear. The Act was only intended to protect authors, not reporters, and although it might be that reporters ought to be protected, it by no means followed that Parliament could place reporters and their employers in the same position as authors. He therefore

## NEMESIS

decided in favour of the defendant. The President of the Probate Division and Lord Justice Romer concurring, the appeal was allowed and judgment given for the defendant with costs.

This decision was no small triumph for *The Bodley Head*. Lane was, very naturally, elated at the result. He circulated printed copies of the judgment of the Court of Appeal and added a few comments of his own:

‘One can understand’, he says, ‘newspapers protesting against the reprinting of leaders and special articles of research contributed by distinguished experts, or, again, war news, obtained from the seat of war at great cost and often at great personal risk to the correspondent. But *The Times* itself is only asking for copyright in news for twenty-four hours; whilst copyright for forty-two years, or longer, is claimed for the report of another man’s thoughts and words. . . . That day (the day of issue) over, the paper is a thing of the past, and as a matter of fact most of the issues of *The Times* containing the speeches in this volume are out of print at *The Times* office. . . . Most daily papers are unobtainable a week after publication. On what ground can they assail the person who reprints such reports, in which manifestly they have no longer any interest . . . ?’

The note of triumph and the note of indignation are not absent from this effusion. It savours a little of that which the gods love to chastise. The last act of the drama had yet to be played. The case was taken to the House of Lords and they, in their turn, upset the decision of the Court of Appeal.

He would be a rash man who should venture to interpose his frail and puny person between the contending forces of these learned Brid'oisons. He would be inevitably and ignominiously crushed. Yet it does seem that,

YET, AFTER ALL—

in spite of what the Law and its exponents may say, the rights of the case were rather in favour of Lane. There is no doubt a great deal to be said for reporters. They are a patient and conscientious body of men and exhibit habits of industry and loyalty to duty that are worthy of a better cause. Nevertheless, it would seem to be going a little far to invest them, and, through them, the newspaper proprietor, with copyright for a long term of years, in a speech which they have merely transcribed *verbatim*, and which will in all probability be out of print in a month.

## THE CONNOISSEUR

As I have already remarked, John Lane was human and liked to be on friendly terms with the eminent. But we must do him justice. In this, as in other things, he had a fine taste. He discriminated. Illustrious lineage, or wealth, had, as we have seen, to be united to something else: political, or literary attainments, or a splendid collection of pictures, or of glass, for example, if Lane was to set out on the warpath.

To be a publisher, in the sense that John Lane was a publisher, affords a splendid opportunity to a man of tact and taste and knowledge, and particularly that branch of knowledge which is known as *savoir vivre*, to gain the *entrée* to social strongholds whose drawbridge would never be lowered to a mere purveyor of printed merchandise.

In his early days, Lane was anxious to improve the acquaintance of a certain Mr. George Neighbour. Mr. Neighbour had no aristocratic connexions. He was, in fact, a grocer. But he was no ordinary grocer. He was a man of considerable wealth and influence and his shop in Regent Street attracted many and illustrious customers. But what perhaps distinguished him most markedly from the ordinary run of grocers was his interest in bees, of which he was a notable cultivator. It was he, I understand, who exported the first family of bees to

## BEES AND BOOKPLATES

Australia. Whether that be true or not, it is quite certain that John Lane lost no time in making himself acquainted with the habits of bees in order that he might the more easily conciliate the good graces of Mr. Neighbour. It may perhaps be due to the interest he took in a race of insects so beloved of the Muses, that in after years their children, the Poets, came swarming in such numbers in and about *The Bodley Head*.

After bees, came bookplates. They were a great resource. A colleague of Lane's at the Railway Clearing House had described to me how Lane once produced, for the edification of his fellow-clerks, a letter he had received from a duchess in answer to a question he had addressed to her regarding Her Grace's coat-of-arms! His enthusiasm for bookplates, which was perfectly genuine, brought about an acquaintanceship with Sir Augustus Franks of the British Museum, an acquaintanceship which soon ripened into a close friendship. It was by Sir Augustus Franks that he was introduced to Dr. Richard Garnett, Keeper of Printed Books, whose counsel and guidance were at this time invaluable to him.

Thus it was by interesting himself in the things in which others were interested, that he was able to bring himself into relationship with those whom he desired to conciliate, and through whom he designed to advance the fortunes, or the prestige, of his house. I do not mean to suggest that Lane's enthusiasms were manufactured *ad hoc*. But I mean that he was able to turn them to good account; to make the most of them.

Lane was a born collector. Bookplates, books, prints, samplers, china, glass, silver, pewter, pictures, fans—I do not for a moment suppose that that comes near to exhausting the list. It was only the skill with which Mrs. Lane arranged and grouped the heterogeneous

## CREATING COLLECTORS

concourse of objects which her house contained that prevented it from resembling the thing it really was, namely, a museum.

John Lane was a collector who believed in observing all the rigours of the game. He neither gave nor expected quarter. His passion for collecting transcended all his other passions save one, his love of Devonshire. He not only knew how to conciliate the good graces of collectors and connoisseurs, he himself enormously multiplied the species. He created collectors. Someone has said that the real test of salesmanship is to sell to the customer not only what he wants but what he does not want. Lane went one better than that. He created the want. He created it by perfectly legitimate means. He created it by producing things of beauty—desirable things, or sometimes by putting quite ordinary things into such a beautiful vesture of print and paper and binding that the desire for possession in the beholder became irresistible. To be let loose in *The Bodley Head* was to run the risk of sharing the fate of that member of the Fugger family of Augsburg, who squandered so lavishly his substance upon books that his kinsmen were obliged to lock him up as one incapable of the proper management of his own affairs. There was John Gray's *Silverpoints*, for example. Presented in the Victorian splendours of padded morocco, gilt-edged paper stiff as cardboard, with Christmas-card illustrations —what bibliophile would have wanted it? But in its willow-green binding with its design in gold by Charles Ricketts, its hand-made paper and beautiful type, so slender and so virginal—why, it would have made a bibliophile of the most hardened Philistine. Similarly, Oscar Wilde's *Sphinx* in its lovely apparel of vellum and gold!



‘THE PEACOCK SKIRT’: ONE OF BEARDSLEY’S ILLUSTRATIONS  
TO ‘SALOME.’



## A PROTEST BY WILDE

‘Do you call *that* poetry, Mr. Wilde?’ asked Mr. Edward Carson in tones of withering scorn, as he quoted a passage at the trial. ‘Not as *you* read it, Mr. Carson,’ was the unperturbed reply. And not, perhaps, as any other publisher would have printed and bound it. The *St. James’s Gazette* said that ‘by charming workmanship’ Mathews and Lane had contrived to impress booksellers with the belief that a volume might have an æsthetic and commercial value. ‘They have made it possible to speculate in the latest discovered poet, as in a new company—with the difference that an operation in the former can be done with three half-crowns.’ This sounded rather like introducing the money-changers into the temple, and it may be true that some bold bad men there are who speculate in books, who ‘lay them down’, not like wine for their own consumption, but with the deliberate purpose of selling them again at a premium. Nevertheless, the man who bought *Silver-points* or *Poems* by Lord de Tabley to sell again, and *did* so, must have had a heart of stone.

Sometimes, though rarely, there were divergences of taste between author and publisher, and in one instance, I think, the author was in the right. Oscar Wilde’s play ‘Salome’, translated from the French by Lord Alfred Douglas, and illustrated by Beardsley in drawings which exhibit him at the high-water mark of his genius, first appeared in a binding of coarse Irish linen of a pale blue colour—I allude to the small paper edition, the large paper was bound more fittingly in a dark olive-green silk. The pale blue Irish homespun gave great offence to Wilde and he expressed himself with vehemence:

‘The cover of “Salome” is quite dreadful. Don’t spoil a lovely book. Have simply a folded vellum wrapper with the design in scarlet—much cheaper, and

## NOTABLE DESIGNERS

much better. The texture of the present cover is coarse and common. It is quite impossible and spoils the real beauty of the interior. Use up this horrid Irish stuff for stories, etc. Don't inflict it on a work of art—like "Salome" . . . I loathe it. So does Beardsley.' Still, the 'work of art' did come out in the 'horrid Irish stuff'. Another poet who, I remember, laid down the law—and with better success—regarding the binding of his books was John Davidson. There was to be nothing fanciful for him—plain, honest dark blue buckram was what he wanted, and got. C. S. Ricketts was responsible for the most beautiful bindings of this period, such as those of the *Poems Dramatic and Lyrical* of Lord de Tabley, *In the Key of Blue* by John Addington Symonds. Other notable designers who conferred an added distinction on many Bodley Head books were Walter Crane, Selwyn Image, Laurence Housman, Gleeson White, J. Illingworth Kay, and, of course, Aubrey Beardsley, who designed all the title-pages for the 'Keynotes' series.

This revival in the art of bookmaking, for which *The Bodley Head* was so largely responsible, could not, and did not fail to bring about a marked change in the book trade. The public, as distinguished from the small and select company of book collectors, began to hoard books merely for the purpose of external decoration. Lane did not so much pander to this desire as create it. *The Bodley Head* and its books became a vogue. Not to know what *The Bodley Head* had just brought out or was about to bring out was to be altogether out of the swim. It was to argue oneself a Scythian, a Barbarian. Once get well into the main current of *le snobisme britannique* and you will be borne along triumphantly towards the shores of success. At one time the head of Bodley was easily distinguishable above the swirling waters;

## NO EAR FOR MUSIC

but soon other heads were seen bobbing about, and now they are so numerous you can scarcely see the stream for the swimmers. After all, *le snobisme* is merely the desire to be in the fashion, that is to say, the fashion set by the cultured few, the *cognoscenti*. What harm in it when the fashion is for things beautiful? There could be no question about *The Bodley Head* books. They were beautiful and the sum-total of the artistic beauty of the world has been notably increased by them and by those others, their successors, to whom *The Bodley Head* pointed the way.

The making of a beautiful book is a highly skilled affair and demands great technical knowledge. Of this technical knowledge, Lane was completely innocent. But he knew what he wanted; he visualized clearly the result he aimed at. That is something. It is, indeed, a great deal, but it is not all. Frederic Chapman knew much, Herbert Jenkins knew more and Basil Willett more still about the technical side of book-production.

There was one form of art quite beyond John Lane's ken. Of music, it must be confessed, he did not know the elements. It was no fault of his. Nature had denied him an ear, and he was incapable of distinguishing 'Home Sweet Home' from 'God Save the King'. I remember going one Sunday afternoon to an *At Home* at Lancaster Gate Terrace at which Adolphe Hallis, the well-known pianist, was to give a recital. There was a great concourse of guests, but as soon as the music began Lane crept from the room and did not reappear. When, at length, I went downstairs to take my departure, I discovered Lane sitting huddled up in the morning-room as a man taking refuge from a storm might cower under a hedge. An expression of preternatural gloom brooded upon his countenance and he betrayed those

## A SINISTER IMPROVISATION

signs of *malaise* which animals are wont to exhibit at the approach of a thunderstorm. Nevertheless, there was one occasion on which music spoke to him with ominous, indeed sinister distinctness. One night, Francis Grierson, who, among his many talents, included a remarkable gift for improvising on the pianoforte, came to Lane's house. He brought with him a friend, a sort of 'fidus Achates' who accompanied him everywhere. Grierson sat down at the piano and played and played, while the twilight gradually deepened into night. At the end of each improvisation, the fidus Achates, whose name I forget, would announce the theme of what was to follow. Finally in the gloom, for not so much as a candle had been lit, he gave out 'The Sinking of the *Titanic*'. The treatment of the tragic theme was so overwhelmingly impressive and realistic, and had such a profound effect upon Lane, that he could not throw it off, and postponed for a fortnight his departure for America, although he had arranged to sail the very next day.

Nor is that the only instance of the potent effect of music, or, at least, of sound, on John Lane. Some years ago, in order to accommodate the overflow of their stock, the firm took the lease of a crypt underneath a certain London church. The place is roomy and dry, but it is not cheerful. Its sole furniture, in addition to the books, consists of tombstones, and other emblems of mortality, ranged along the walls. It is now lit by electric light, but in the days of which I speak, candles afforded the solitary means of illumination. Into this lugubrious cave Lane descended one late afternoon in search of some book or other. He was groping about with his candle in the sepulchral solitude when, suddenly, without the smallest warning, the air was filled with shrieks and

## TERROR IN THE CRYPT

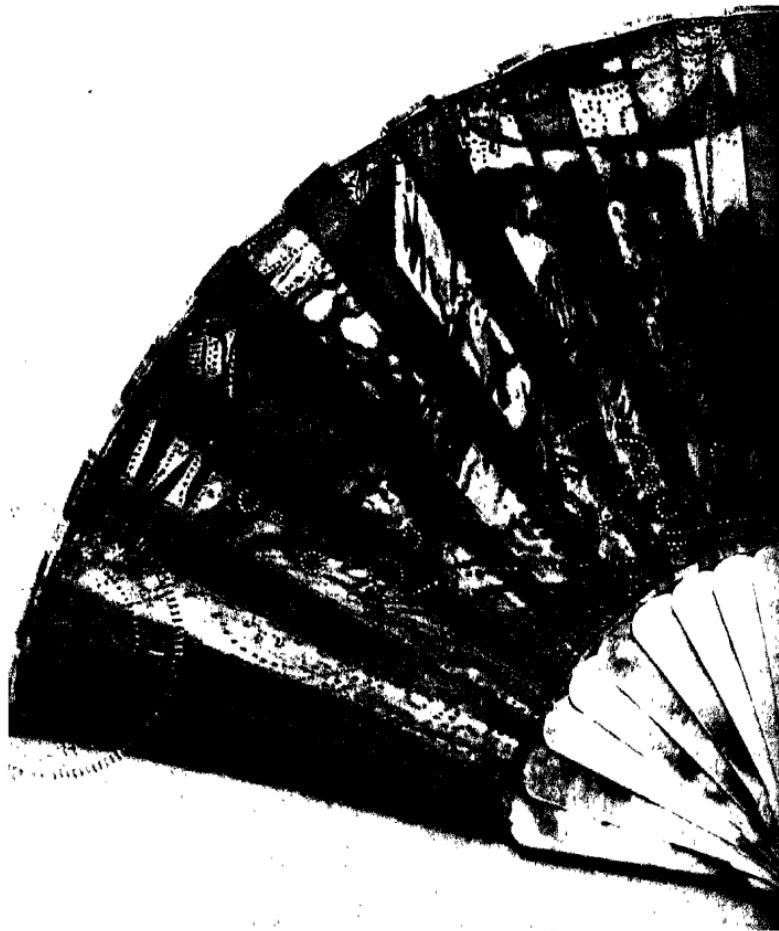
lamentations. It was as though the gates of Tartarus had burst asunder. It began with a grinding and creaking, as of gigantic iron doors groaning on their hinges, and swiftly increased to a most terrifying chorus of yells, as if those doors had opened to let forth the spirits of the damned. Lane was no coward, but this was a sound to daunt the courage of a Drake or a Grenville. For a moment he was beside himself. He was about to turn and flee when, suddenly, the sound of the organ in the church above fell upon his ear. The appalling clamour that he had heard was but the mechanism of the hydraulic apparatus that supplied the organ with wind, getting into action. The organist had come in to practise. That was all; but he was nearly the death of Lane.

The tendency of our art treasures to migrate westwards was long the lament of all true patriots. No sooner was it rumoured that a great collection was about to come upon the market than hordes of American dealers began to flock like birds of prey across the ocean. Our famous and historic books, early specimens of printing, rarest incunabula, antique silver, pictures—above all, pictures—must needs quit their ancient home and 'Sail beyond the sunset' at the bidding of the almighty dollar. Even our buildings were not safe. Milton's cottage at Chalfont St. Giles had a narrow escape and it was not so long ago that an offer, no doubt a handsome one, was made for some ancient gateway or rampart in one of our cathedral cities—was it Winchester?—in order that it might be re-erected, stone by stone, in some American town of the same name. Various suggestions were put forward to remedy this state of affairs. John Lane, though a good American, was a still better English-

## A RUBENS CEILING

man, and no one deplored more than he this expatriation of great works of art which ought to have been looked upon as national heirlooms. In this respect France and Italy were far ahead of us. Germany too exercises a methodical and effective control over her art treasures whether in public or in private hands. Lane used to recount, with a mixture of envy and satisfaction, how, when he was staying at Wesel, a little town on the Lower Rhine, he was taken to see one of its few treasures—a ceiling designed by Rubens and, according to tradition, constructed by him. It was in a great room on the ground-floor of what once had been an old patrician mansion and represented in bold relief Apollo driving the chariot of dawn, the fiery steeds seeming about to leap down from the ceiling. The house was three hundred years old and the hand of time had been heavy upon it. The fine old room with its Rubens ceiling had been divided by a partition. Half of it was a draper's shop; the other a living room. The god of dawn and his coursers were part in one room and part in another. The little town had forgotten its Rubens or had ceased to care for it; but the Government had not. The ceiling, so John Lane was told by the proprietor of the shop, was under the care of a commission, one of which is established in all the German provinces for the preservation of their art treasures and antiquities. An expert comes at frequent intervals to examine the ceiling and to see that it is properly cared for. Although it is the property of the owner of the house, it cannot be disposed of without the Government's consent. Lane used to relate this story to show the sort of thing that ought to be done in England to avert the danger of losing by sale or neglect the treasures which are among her greatest glories.





A CONDER FAN: 'THE KEY OF B'





## BOOKS AND PRINTS

After Rubens this will come as something of an anti-climax, but I well remember that when, after my great-uncle's death, the contents of his house or a great part of them had been sold, Lane came to me in great consternation to tell me that two of our family portraits were exposed for sale in a second-hand furniture shop near Bideford Market. With him I hurried to the place and rescued them from that undignified situation.

Glass, china, silver, pewter—these things were among Lane's divinities, but they were his *dii minores*. Pictures were his real flame. He worshipped them above even books. Indeed it may be said that he sold books in order to buy himself pictures. How he got his knowledge of them is something of a mystery. He had a quick receptive brain, he loved his subject and he was always learning in that great university of his—the world. I have heard tell that in his young days, when he was in the Clearing House, he used to bring his purchases, his bargains, to a dealer in prints whose shop was somewhere in the neighbourhood of his lodgings in Southwick Street. This expert used to look them through and sort out the sheep from the goats. What became of the discarded ones is not known, but the others, the elect, were carefully preserved, with the result that his collection of prints became a very large and very notable one. Here is a letter he wrote to *The Times* concerning the sea in pictures, poetry and fiction.

'I have read with profound interest the shipping number of Friday's date, especially the able section dealing with the sea painters and their pictures and the sea in poetry and fiction, and I should like to thank the writer of the former for disclosing the fact that the two Van de Veldes, father and son, were both buried in St.

A LETTER TO *THE TIMES*

James's Church, Piccadilly, for it gives me a new interest in my parish church.

'However, I should also like to add some few names to the English school of artists, which seem to me worthy of record in your columns.

'The writer would not appear to be aware of the recent discovery of a noble seascape by Nicholas Hilliard, representing the fleet of the Spanish Armada, which tradition says was painted for Queen Elizabeth, and was afterwards in the possession of Charles I. And I should like to include as representative of the eighteenth century the names of Brooking, a fine example of whose work may be seen in the Foundling Hospital, and Samuel Scott. Rouquet, in his very rare book *The Present State of the Arts in England*, 1755, states that "Marine painting in Vandervelt's taste is a branch of the art in which one need not be afraid to affirm that the English excel. And yet we must not imagine that there are a great number of able artists in this, any more than in the other branches. But when one or two hands become as eminent, as those who are now distinguished for marine pictures in England" (Brooking & Scott), "are not they capable of giving a character of superiority to their country?"

'"Every thing that relates to navigation is so well known in England, and so interesting to that nation, that it is not at all surprising to see them greatly pleased with marine pictures. It is become almost the fashion for a sea officer to employ a painter to draw the picture of the ship which he commanded in an engagement, and where he came off with glory: this is a flattering monument, for which he pays with pleasure. The hero scrupulously directs the artist in every thing that relates to the situation of his vessel, as well in regard to those

## ARTISTS OF THE SEA

with whom, as to those against whom he fought. His politeness will not permit him to put any one out of his place: and this is a new point, of which the painter must take particular care. And indeed an error in arrangement upon this occasion might be taken as a very great incivility."

'Rouquet, himself a considerable artist, had lived in England for thirty years, and according to Walpole, was no mean judge.

'For the nineteenth century, I should like to add the names of William Anderson, Thomas Luny, Samuel Prout, Edwin Hayes, and Henry Moore, greatest of all, not only in the estimation of English critics, but of connoisseurs on the continent and especially in France. To-day we have with us Mr. Wyllie, Mr. Donald Maxwell and Mr. Brangwyn, whose romantic and decorative interpretation of the craft of the sea is unlike that of any other marine artist, ancient or modern: while those who are interested in the art of to-morrow, I can only refer to the work of M. Jean Puy, No. 44 in the Grafton Gallery's Second Post Impressionist Exhibition, and to No. 86, M. André L'Hôte's "Port de Bordeaux".

'In the poetry section, it would seem difficult for me to think of the sea poets without Dibdin, Swinburne, Mr. Henry Newbolt, Mr. Alfred Noyes, and Mr. William Watson, whose noble "Hymn to the Sea" must reverberate in the memory of all who read it.

"Sea that breakest for ever, that breakest, and never art  
broken

Like unto thine, from of old, springeth the spirit of  
man."

But for myself, I must confess that I love the sea only in painting and poetry.'

## SIR WILLIAM OSLER

Lane had an amazing knowledge of the whereabouts of notable pictures. He seemed to possess a mental inventory of the contents of all the great houses and ancient manors throughout the length and breadth of the country. In a letter to the *Morning Post*, written shortly after the death of Sir William Osler, Lane speaks of the latter's enthusiasm for Sir Thomas Browne and his works, of which he possessed every known edition, including the rare edition, surreptitiously printed in 1642, of *Religio Medici*, as well as many manuscripts. 'He also had' Lane goes on, 'copies of all his engraved portraits, and photographs of all known paintings of him with the exception of one which I, happily, was the means of bringing to his notice. I shall never forget', Lane continues, 'his intense interest when I told him of the existence of this unrecorded portrait of Sir Thomas Browne within twenty-five miles of Oxford. Thanks to the courtesy of the fourth Lord Sherborne, its owner, a day was set for a visit to Sherborne House in August, 1915. Sir William was profoundly impressed by this, to him, unknown portrait of his hero, the more so as the picture of the mother of Sir Thomas Browne hangs in the same room. This lady married, for her second husband, Sir Thomas Dutton, through whom Lord Sherborne inherited these portraits. Lord Sherborne was then in his eighty-fifth year, yet, unlike some owners, he showed a keen interest in all his treasures.'

Besides his interest in the iconography of Sir Thomas Browne, Sir William Osler had another claim upon Lane's regard. He was a West Country man. 'Sir William Osler', says Lane, in the same letter, 'had a whimsical sense of humour which added a charm to his exceptional gift as a *raconteur*, probably inherited from his Cornish ancestry, for the Cornish, at least since

## LANE'S CHIEF ENTHUSIASM

the days of Wesley, have been famous story-tellers. There is a story told of Thackeray which goes to confirm this. On arriving one day with a friend at the Garrick Club and hearing peals of laughter, Thackeray replied to his friend, who inquired the cause: "Oh, it's only Hicks of Bodmin telling one of his stories." But Lane always had an eye to business. In the midst of this panegyric of Sir William Osler he inserts this—we will not call it advertisement—this skilful, yet perfectly natural, reference to one of the forthcoming books on his list:

"Those who knew Professor Osler were aware of his keen interest in all the great men of his profession, and, broadminded as he was in all things affecting it, they will deeply regret that he was not spared to offer his tribute to "Women's Place in Medicine", by writing, as he had hoped, an introduction to the English edition of *L'Histoire des Femmes Médecins*, by Dr. Mélanie Lipinska."

I suppose that Lane's chief enthusiasm was for the English portrait painters of the eighteenth century. As an example of his knowledge of the art of that period, a knowledge which was as minute as it was encyclopædic, I could not do better than quote from a review of Mrs. Ada Earland's "John Opie, R.A., and his Circle", which he contributed to the *Outlook* for the 27th January, 1912. Its manner is highly characteristic of Lane:

"John Opie was born at St. Agnes, near Truro, in 1761, son of a village carpenter. He early showed remarkable aptitude for mathematics and drawing, and soon became an itinerant artist. Among his earliest patrons were the Prideaux-Brunes of Padstow, who have given a helping hand to so many. The famous Dr. Wolcot, better known as "Peter Pindar", entered into a

## THE CORNISH WONDER

kind of partnership with him, brought him to London, and introduced him as "the Cornish Wonder". He originally spelled his name "Oppy", and in confirmation of this disputed point his great-great-nephew, Mr. Parsons, can produce a book in which his autograph is so written. Opie was, it may be said, the rough diamond among his brethren of the brush; consequently it would seem he was not so much employed as some of his contemporaries in painting beautiful ladies. Besides, he would never flatter; though it is possible, had he lived longer—he was only forty-five when he died—under the refining influence of Amelia, his talented and charming second wife, he might have softened his manner of painting, if only to compete with that insidious flatterer Lawrence, who made even Queen Caroline beautiful. But then gossip said he was in love with her.

'I should like to see a room in a forthcoming Royal Academy winter-exhibition devoted to the works of Opie, when perhaps Sir Charles Graves-Sawle could be induced to lend his charming "Mrs. Prideaux" and "Mrs. Mary Graves", the Hon. Mrs. Tremayne her "Arthur Tremayne of Sydenham", Lord Normanton his beautiful "Mrs. Siddons", Lord Selborne the exquisite "Hon. Mary Legge" (aged four), Lord Iddesleigh his noble portrait of Northcote, Sir C. Phillips Opie's portrait of himself, Colonel Prideaux-Brune his "Charles Prideaux", "William Prideaux", "Mary Prideaux", "Edmund and Neville Prideaux", "Opie" (aged nineteen) and two dogs, the Louvre its "Lady in White", Sir Joshua Rowley his "Lady Harland" (painted in 1780), Mr. Weller-Poley his portrait of George Weller-Poley, and Mrs. Tharp her "Humphrey Prideaux" and his wife "Jenny" and two of their sons, "Richard Neville" and "William". Opie was fond of painting the pretty

## MISTRESS ANNE KILLIGREW

Mrs. Humphrey Prideaux, of Prideaux Place. No doubt on one of his visits to Place he conceived the idea of painting her in the white and gold dress and with her hair in ringlets, just as Henrietta Maria was painted by Vandyke in the picture which is still at Prideaux Place. These pictures, save the three first, are all unrecorded by Miss Earland. It is singular that she has omitted the beautiful portrait in the Louvre, considering that she devotes a very interesting chapter to Opie's own visit there. I have sometimes thought that Gainsborough's last words—"We are all going to Heaven, and Vandyke is of the company"—may have referred to the ultimate goal of immortal works when masterpiece meets masterpiece. How happy would Opie have been could he have foreseen that some day works by him would find a resting-place in the Louvre, and Houghton Hall with its historical art associations, for it is here that probably his greatest picture, "Lady Smith as a Gipsy", is to-day.

'Cornwall has produced in Opie her one considerable artist, except Henry Bone the Enameller, and yet perhaps in this connection Mistress Anne Killigrew should be mentioned. Although not actually born in the country, she was daughter of a famous Cornish house and, according to Dryden, was "excellent in the two sister arts of Poesy and Painting". Her beautiful portrait "painted by herself" is known to us through a rare mezzotint by Beckett. Anne Killigrew was not only a portrait but a landscape painter and, along with Mary Beale, amongst the first women artists of whom there is any record in this country. She painted James II and his second wife, Mary of Modena. Anne Killigrew died of smallpox in 1685, in her twenty-fifth year.

## PRIDEAUX PLACE

‘Dryden sings her praises thus:—

“Her pencil drew whate’er her soul designed.

The scene was changed: with bold erected look  
Our martial King the sight with reverence strook;  
For not content to express his outward part,  
Her hand called out the image of his heart.

Our Phoenix Queen was portrayed too so bright—  
Beauty alone could beauty take so right.”

Where are these pictures to-day? Is it possible that the lost portrait of “our Phoenix Queen” is the one now at Prideaux Place? Over the mantelpiece in the beautiful old Dining Hall at Place there is a fine portrait of Sir Nicholas Prideaux, which tradition—well supported by workmanship and style—says was painted by Nicholas Hilliard at the time the house was rebuilt in 1588, the year of the Armada, when it is recorded that Sir Nicholas Prideaux and his son John each subscribed £25 towards the defence of this country.

‘The adjoining county of Devon has given us among others Shute, Hilliard, James Gandy, Hudson, William Gandy, Reynolds, Cosway, Ozias Humphry, Downman, Northcote, Haymen, Haydon, Eastlake, Prout, Calvert, S. Cousins, and greatest of all, Turner, who claimed to be a Devonian. Yet in the days of the Primitives there must have been a vast school of artists in Cornwall to judge from her many ancient and beautiful crosses, the remains of noble frescoes in her churches, and the truly wonderful if quaint windows in the church of St. Neots, dating from the thirteenth century, the work, it is said, of local artists, and dedicated to Cornish saints. Corn-

## NEWLYN AND ST. IVES

wall too seems to have been visited by many great artists, although not always from choice, for it is recorded that John Van Eyck on October 25, 1428, owing to a mistake of the pilot, narrowly escaped being wrecked near Land's End, and put in at Falmouth, where he remained until December 2; it is thus highly probable that he made drawings of Pendennis Castle. The present stone structure was built by Henry VIII, but there existed in Van Eyck's time extensive earthworks, remains of which are easily identified. Will experts please examine very carefully the often crowded backgrounds of his pictures for a record of this? Thanks to Mr. Weale's discoveries, it is known that he visited Plymouth in 1428 and again in 1429, and it is supposed that one of her vanished churches figures in one of his pictures, and we know that old St. Paul's appears in Baron Gustave Rothschild's "Our Lady and Child, S. Elizabeth of Hungary, Saint Barbara, and A Carthusian". Moreover, Holbein has immortalised two Cornishmen by his drawings "S. George of Cornwall" and "Reskimer a Cornish Gent". Artificers too were not lacking, at any rate in Tudor days; indeed, I have before me a seal spoon bearing the curious Truro hallmark, that of a pig with a bell round its neck, the symbol of St. Antony. There was also an assay office at Tregoney, and in the Ellis Collection at the Victoria and Albert Museum there is a salt-cellar bearing the Tregoney mark, a pomegranate. To-day Cornwall is famous for its two art centres, Newlyn and St. Ives, where much good work is being done by Mr. and Mrs. Stanhope Forbes, Mr. Gotch, Mr. Garsten, Mr. and Mrs. Knight, and many others; but the artists who have most successfully interpreted the strange melancholy of its haunting land-and sea-scape are Lamorna Birch, Moffat Lindner,

## A FASCINATING BOOK

Julius Olsson, and Baragwanath King. It would seem to require some moral courage for so many good artists to exile themselves in far-away Cornwall for the love of their art. Perhaps it may, however, be that Cornish families, like the well-known Bolithos, have extended to the settlement facilities and encouragement characteristic of Cornish hospitality.

'I cannot close this fascinating book without expressing my gratitude alike to the author and the publisher for reproducing so many interesting and characteristic pictures.'

And here, in an extract from a review also contributed to the *Outlook* (March 15th, 1913), of Mr. C. H. Collins Baker's 'Lely and the Stuart Portrait Painters', we shall find another instance of his mastery of the subject of English portraiture.

'Mr. Collins Baker causes us to reconsider and to appraise at a much higher value the works of Sir Peter Lely, against which a certain prejudice has long existed, arising, in all probability, through a merely superficial knowledge gained from the inferior portraits of the courtesans of Charles II at Hampton Court, as so few are acquainted with his great series of British Admirals at Greenwich. Nor is his information purely technical, for many interesting personal details have come to light, some of almost historical value, as to Lely's relations with the King, and it is now evident that Charles II showed his royal appreciation with characteristic zeal not only by encouraging his art but by borrowing his money.'

'With regard to Kneller, however, it is more than probable that he owed much of his pre-eminence to the early death of Riley. The author has demonstrated beyond doubt that his artistic gifts were of a high order; and had Riley lived to supply the stimulus of com-

## A STORY OF KNELLER

petition he might have painted fewer pictures but of greater excellence. My own feeling is that this painter was given to insidious flattery. Here is a passage from Jonathan Richardson's *Works* (1773 edition), which fully bears out my contention:—

“Sir Godfrey Kneller had painted the Duke of Hamilton's picture at whole length, and when quite finished, sent to him to desire he would call and see it before it was sent home, that, if there should be anything he would have altered, it might be done before it was hung up. The Duke looked a great while at it, said nothing; serious—went to the glass and looked at himself; returned to the picture; went back to the glass—rather out of humour. Sir Godfrey was uneasy, piqued—asked, with some warmth, if his grace disliked the picture. ‘Z——ds,’ said he, ‘when I look in the glass I am a poltroon; when I look there I am a man of quality,’ and then took out his pocket-book, and presented him with a bank bill. ‘No, my lord,’ said Sir Godfrey, ‘by God, I will not receive more than one for the same picture; you have over-paid it already.’”

‘Mr. Horace Round possesses a very fine portrait group of the two children of Sir Thomas Rolt, of Sacomb Park, Herts, by Sir Godfrey Kneller, which has escaped the author's notice. It is similar in pose to the same artist's picture of the children of the first Duke of Manchester. And to the important section of foreign artists who worked in England in the seventeenth century I should also like to add Godfrey Schalcken of Dort, who painted Sir Thomas Rokeby, Knight; and Isaac Paling, from Holland, who made a portrait of Colonel Metcalfe Graham. Hanneman, too, painted a portrait of Andrew Marvell which is not included in the list of that artist's works.’

## AMERICAN PORTRAITS

Besides the British artists of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, of which he was an expert collector, Lane took a great interest in early American painters, and was the possessor of notable works by Mather Brown, Waldo Jowett, Benjamin West and Gilbert Stuart. His collection, indeed, included what, with the exception of Stuart's 'Washington', was perhaps his most interesting portrait, that of Colonel John Trumbull, painted when Trumbull was in Bridewell Prison, in the year 1780.

Considering his passion for pictures, it was to be expected that Lane would specialise on books by artists or about them. As the passion grew, I believe the tendency to bring out expensive books about artists illustrated with costly reproductions of their pictures became rather an embarrassment to the other members of the firm, who endeavoured to put on the brake a little.

One of the most famous of these art books was the reprint of *Nollekens and His Times*, by John Thomas Smith ('Rainy Day' Smith), which appeared under the accomplished editorship of Wilfrid Whitten (John o' London), who knows more about literary and artistic London, and writes about it more engagingly, than any man living.

It would be quite impossible to enumerate all these books on art and artists, but I recall particularly two or three. There was, for example, the *Life and Works of Ozias Humphry, R.A.*, by Dr. George C. Williamson, which was rightly described as a sumptuous volume. No less deserving of that adjective were the books on Angelica Kauffmann and John Zoffany by Lady Victoria Manners and Dr. G. C. Williamson, and Dubuisson's life of Bonington beautifully illustrated in colour and half-tone.

## TALENTED ARTISTS

I think it was in connexion with this book on Bonington that Lane made a special journey to Paris. At all events, whatever the occasion, he asked me to see him off at Victoria. He was in a great flurry and had left himself very little time. When we got to the station he discovered—disaster of disasters!—that he had forgotten his passport! Would I telephone his butler and find out whether he had left it at the house? With some difficulty I managed to get through and was explaining things to the man when Lane rushed into the box. He had found the passport in his pocket!

Then of course there were books by Brangwyn and books about Brangwyn all copiously illustrated. There were books illustrated by all manner of talented and distinguished people whom merely to name were a lengthy task. I will but mention a few. Donald Maxwell, Jan and Cora Gordon, Frank Papé, John Austen, 'Fish' (Mrs. Walter Sefton), J. de Bosschère, Henry Keen, Charles Simpson, Walter Shaw Sparrow, Hamzeh Carr, Helen McKie. Nor must I omit to mention a magnificent work, profusely illustrated, on *The Modern Woodcut*, by Herbert Furst. But the art books of *The Bodley Head* deserve a volume to themselves and an expert on art to describe them.

## *Chapter XIX*

### THE LAST

EARLY IN the year 1921 Lane turned his business into a private company. Soon after that, he closed his American branch. He was putting off his heavy armour.

A year or two before his death, I again found myself in close touch with John Lane. In some ways it was as if those early days in the 'Nineties' had returned. In addition to the *Life of Anatole France* on which I was then engaged, there were many incidental tasks—reading, editing and so forth—which I was called on to perform for the firm. For all these purposes and in order that I might be in closer touch with things, I was allotted a room—it was indeed an attic—on the top floor of the Albany premises. It thus came about that I saw Lane nearly every day at Vigo Street and often went back with him to tea or dinner at Lancaster Gate Terrace. The burden of his seventy years lay, or seemed to lie, easily upon him. His mind was alert, his step active. He was as full of ideas, as full of energy as ever, and then, as always, not to have had some scheme on hand, some end to pursue, would have been intolerable to him. It is true that he often complained of his health; but as he had done that with great regularity ever since I had known him and in the face of convincing evidence to the contrary, I paid no particular

## RESTLESS ENERGY

attention to it now. This sturdy little man with his trim, pointed beard, rather florid complexion and quick bustling ways, had always been something of a valeudinarian. He was, according to his own account, never in really first-rate health. He suffered, it is true, from an intermittent affection of the eyes which I understood to be a form of gout and which at times completely incapacitated him; otherwise his ailments had been unimportant. Of course that he should be occasionally fatigued was not to be wondered at, seeing how incessant were his activities. He was always living at full pressure, and his expenditure of nervous energy must have been amazing. And yet I believe that work under whose burden many a man would have succumbed, really kept John Lane alive. He would have languished and died if he had had nothing to do. Even when he was taking a holiday, he would never rest. One of the latest and most vivid recollections I have of him was seeing him bustling with great energy up the Bideford High Street when he was supposed to be resting under his doctor's orders. He had written a letter to a newspaper—a habit that grew on him in his later years—on some matter of archæological interest and was hurrying, as if he had not a moment to lose, to get it typed.

Nevertheless, for all that he seemed so well in these later days, there were one or two indications which, though I did not heed them at the time, now lead me to suppose that he may have had an idea, based on intuition hidden even from those who knew him most intimately, that his race was nearly run and that he who more than fifty years ago had come up a little farmer's boy from his Hartland home to try his fortunes in the great city would soon be returning thither for the last time. It may be that what we took for energy, for

## A JOURNEY TO BRIGHTON

unabating activity, was merely that he was being carried on by his own momentum after the motive force had ceased to operate. At any rate it comes back to me now how often and how wistfully he would turn the conversation on to Devonshire and his early days. One evening in particular I remember. After dinner he went upstairs and came down with an enormous cardboard box bulging with letters, photographs, and relics of the people and places he had known as a boy, and that night he did actually speak of his end as of something if not yet imminent, at all events not very remote. Nevertheless, a day or two later, he was at *The Bodley Head* attacking his correspondence, giving orders, throwing out all kinds of suggestions and even mounting the hundred stairs to my attic with undiminished energy.

One night in January 1925 he attended a dinner at the French Hospital of which he was a director—it was an engagement which he rarely if ever missed—and afterwards went to catch a late train down to Brighton where he had arranged to spend a week-end with his sister. The night was cold and damp and foggy and the train was late in starting. He arrived very exhausted. When he returned to town it was evident that he was suffering from a severe chill. Much against his will he was persuaded to remain in bed. Alas, you can keep a man in bed but you cannot make him rest, and John Lane would not rest. There was a telephone at his bedside and he was constantly sending or receiving messages. At first no great anxiety was aroused by his illness, which was indeed nothing more serious than a bad cold, but later it took a graver turn. Finally pneumonia set in and within a fortnight from the date of his first taking to his bed John Lane was dead. The

## A HANDFUL OF GREY ASHES

papers came out with 'Death of a Famous Publisher' occupying the whole of their posters, and the Press in this country, in America and indeed throughout the world, paid eloquent tribute to his memory. His remains were cremated at Golders Green and a memorial service attended by a large concourse of friends among whom were some of the most distinguished names in the world of Art and Letters was held at St. James's, Piccadilly. Later his ashes were taken to Hartland and laid beneath the shadow of St. Nectan's tower. In the churchyard there, hard by the northern porch, a simple Cornish cross records his name, the date of his birth and death. Beneath this inscription is the line from *Samson Agonistes*—

'Nothing is here for tears'

This cross, as well as the memorial tablet inside the church, was erected by his widow, who was destined so soon to follow him to the grave. In February 1927 Mrs. John Lane died after a brief illness and her ashes were laid beside her husband's. The house at Lancaster Gate Terrace was sold and in the space of a few days most of the treasures which had been so eagerly and so patiently sought for and accumulated were dispersed. I say most of his treasures, but not all. To some he had assigned an enduring home.

John Lane directed that all his portraits and engravings relating to Devonshire and the men of Devon should be offered to the Royal Albert Memorial Museum, Exeter; that all his books pertaining to that county should be offered to the City Library, Exeter, except where that library possessed duplicates, in which case they were to be offered to the Municipal Museum and Art Gallery, Plymouth, and the Plymouth Free Public Library, 'for

## PUBLIC BEQUESTS

I confess', he says in a characteristic phrase, 'I have always loved my native county of Devon, and in the glorious history of its sons I have ever found my greatest inspiration and a constant incentive to be worthy of them.' Then he adds that, if his wife consents, these sentiments should be placed on record in a public position in the institutions accepting these gifts, 'in the hope that the same emotions may thereby be fostered in Devonians yet to be'. He further directed that the National Gallery should have the selection of two of his pictures by English artists (in addition to one already given) and of three of his drawings not otherwise bequeathed; that the National Portrait Gallery should have the selection of two of his portraits by English artists in addition to one already given, and finally that, subject to the above selections, the Victoria and Albert Museum should have the choice of two, and the British Museum of three of his drawings by English artists.

The original drawings by Aubrey Beardsley which were at Brooklyn Museum, New York, were to be photographed at the expense of the firm in the same size as the originals (the negatives and prints to be the property of his firm), and, if he had not already made such gifts, then his trustees, with the assistance of Mr. Campbell Dodgson of the British Museum, should select five of these original drawings, two for the National Gallery, one for the British Museum, one for the Victoria and Albert Museum, and one for the Brighton Art Gallery. To the Royal Albert Museum, Exeter, he left the port-wine glass and the remains of the Chamberlain Worcester breakfast service, all formerly belonging to the Reverend John Russell.

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\* \* \*

## STILLNESS AFTER STORM

It was about a year after his death that, journeying one day along the coast from Morwenstow to Bideford, I turned aside to visit the church at Hartland. During the preceding night a gale of terrific violence had swept over Hartland and the surrounding district. A hail-storm of a severity unprecedented in the memory of the inhabitants had shattered hundreds of windows in the houses and cottages, and the standing corn in the fields round about had been cut off clean as with a scythe. But now, though low, ragged clouds were racing across the sky and the horizon was blotted out by drifts of misty rain, the storm had spent its fury and no sound save the tired wind whispering among the dripping trees broke the deep quiet of the churchyard.

There was a certain appropriateness in the scene, and in the succession of stillness after storm. Not that John Lane's life had been stormy. On the whole, indeed, though he had had his tribulations, it had been a singularly happy one. But it had been restless. His blithe, eager spirit compelled him always to be up and doing. He was for ever devising something new, and scanning the horizon of the future.

It must not be supposed that he was wrapped up in himself. On the contrary, he was fond of society, and possessed brilliant social gifts; and he had, what is not always the same thing, a genius for making friends and keeping them. He was a sovereign antidote against faint-heartedness and discouragement. 'He lived', as his epitaph records, 'to encourage and inspire.'

When, after my return to London, I addressed myself to the task of examining John Lane's papers and correspondence, I came across a newspaper cutting on which was printed a poem by another distinguished son of Devon, a poem of which I will take leave to quote the

## HARTLAND AGAIN

three following verses, for they give utterance to a desire that dwells in the heart of every Devon man, whithersoever the Fates may have driven him, the desire to come home at last, his wanderings over, and sleep in the bosom of the land whose beauty has never faded from his memory:

'Where my fathers stood, watching the sea,  
Gale-spent herring-boats hugging the lea,  
There my Mother lives—moorland and tree,  
Sight o' the blossom, Devon to me!

Where my fathers lie, turning to dust,  
This old body throw when die I must.  
There my Mother calls—wakeful is she,  
Sound o' the west wind—Devon to me!

Where my fathers lie—when I am gone,  
Who need pity me dead? never one,  
There my Mother clasps me—let me be,  
Feel o' the red earth—Devon to me!'

That love of Devon, which wrung from John Galsworthy that strange cry of passionate affection, burned with a flame no less pure, no less ardent in the bosom of John Lane. What kindlier fate, then, could one have wished him than to sleep here, when his work was done, in the soil that gave him birth?



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